



नियुक्तियों का बढ़ता कारवां...

सहायक नगर निवेशक/कनीय अभियंता/स्ट्रीट लाईट
इंस्पेक्टर/पाइपलाइन इंस्पेक्टर/खान निरीक्षक/मोटरयान निरीक्षक

का नियुक्ति पत्र वितरण समारोह

मुख्य अतिथि

श्री हेमन्त सोरेन

माननीय मुख्यमंत्री, झारखण्ड

विशिष्ट अतिथि

श्री चम्पाई सोरेन

मा० मंत्री, जल संसाधन विभाग, उच्च एवं तकनीकी शिक्षा
विभाग, झारखण्ड सरकार

श्री सत्यानंद भोक्ता

मा० मंत्री, श्रम, नियोजन, प्रशिक्षण एवं कौशल विकास,
उद्योग विभाग, झारखण्ड सरकार

श्री हफीजुल हसन

मा० मंत्री, अल्पसंख्यक कल्याण विभाग, निबंधन विभाग,
पर्यटन, कला संस्कृति, खेलकूद एवं युवा कार्य विभाग, नगर
विकास एवं आवास विभाग, झारखण्ड सरकार

डॉ. रामेश्वर उरांव

मा० मंत्री, वित्त, योजना एवं विकास, वाणिज्य-कर एवं
संसदीय कार्य विभाग, झारखण्ड सरकार

श्री मिथिलेश कुमार ठाकुर

मा० मंत्री, पेयजल एवं स्वच्छता विभाग,
झारखण्ड सरकार

श्री दीपक बिरुआ

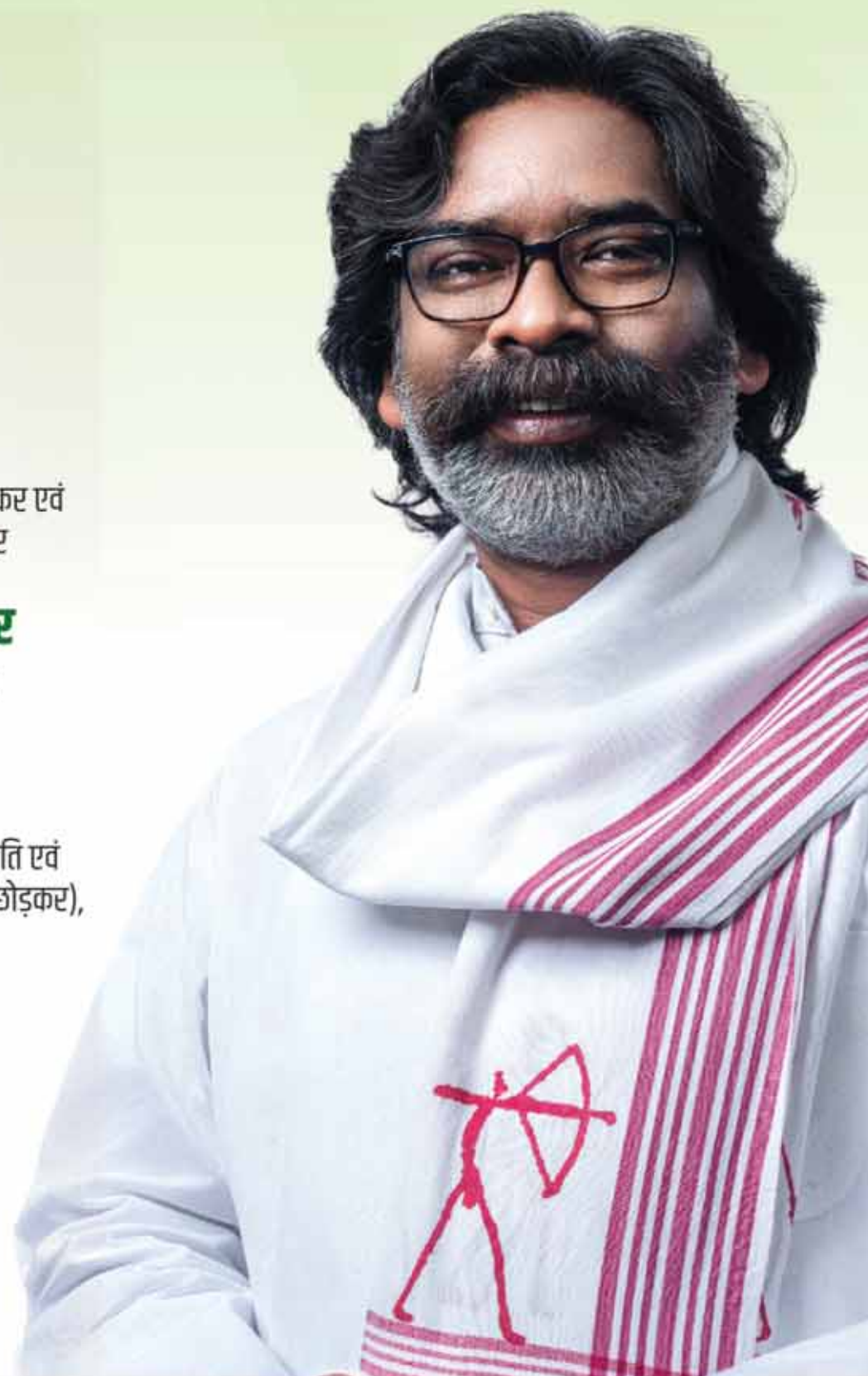
मा० मंत्री, अनुसूचित जनजाति, अनुसूचित जाति एवं
पिछड़ा वर्ग कल्याण (अल्पसंख्यक कल्याण को छोड़कर),
परिवहन विभाग, झारखण्ड सरकार

इस अवसर पर आपकी उपस्थिति प्रार्थनीय है।

23 जुलाई, 2024 | अपराह्न 2:00 बजे

प्रोजेक्ट भवन सभागार, धुर्वा, रांची

सूचना एवं जनसंपर्क विभाग, झारखण्ड सरकार



Backward Classes Commission meeting held in Bokaro

PNS : BOKARO

The State Backward Classes Commission conducted a meeting with district officials, addressing grievances and reviewing departmental compliance.

In a gesture of welcome, Deputy Commissioner Vijaya Jadhav presented a sapling to Chairman Yogendra Prasad Mahto.

The session was presided over by the esteemed Chairman, Yogendra Prasad Mahto, and attended by commission members and district officials. During the meeting, the commission heard complaints received from various sources. Chairman Yogendra Prasad Mahto, along with other commission members, expressed satisfaction with



the compliance reports submitted by the departments. However, in some cases, the commission set deadlines for the submission of updated

reports by the concerned officials.

On the first day, the commission reviewed various matters related to the

Department, Health Department, and Rural Development Department under schemes like MGN-REGA and Abua Awas. The focus was on issues like children's enrollment under the Right to Education (RTE) Act, enrollment in Kasturba Gandhi Residential Girls' School, selection of Sevikas, compensation distribution, and other grievances submitted by applicants.

Chairman Yogendra Prasad Mahto remarked that the compliance on several issues had been satisfactory, but some reports were incomplete. He directed the concerned officials to submit updated reports by the specified deadlines.

DC Vijaya Jadhav emphasized the importance of timely submission of reports requested by the commission. She instructed the relevant officials to ensure that all information sought by the commission is provided promptly.

The meeting was attended by key district officials, including DRDA Director Menka, Additional Municipal Commissioner of Chas Anant Kumar, Assistant Director of Social Security Piyush, District Cooperative Officer Shweta Gudiya, District Panchayati Raj Officer Mohammed Saifiq Alam, and others.

The two-day visit by the State Backward Classes Commission aims to address and resolve issues faced by the backward classes in the district, ensuring efficient and effective governance.

Gangster Aman Sahu shifted to Chaibasa Jail

PRAVIN K MISHRA : GIRIDIH

After the Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS) action, dreaded gangster Aman Sahu was shifted from Giridih Central Jail to Chaibasa jail on Sunday. This is the 9th shift of this infamous gangster over the past 30 months. He is said to have connections with the international gangster, Lawrence Bishnoi.

The Jharkhand ATS, during massive manhunt and search operations had arrested four members of the Aman Sahu gang in connection with death threats to the Giridih Jail Superintendent, Himani Priya.

Those arrested were identified as Roushan Kumar, Shiv Shankar, Avinashi Kumar and Ajay Kumar Thakur in this connection. The two-day long search operation by the ATS that was launched on July 12, ended on July 13.

In an FIR lodged with the Giridih mufassil police station on July 5, Himani Priya, had alleged that gangster, Aman Sahu, and his associate, Mayank Singh, had threatened to kill her over messages and WhatsApp calls on July 2 & 3. The gangsters had also threatened to target Himani's family if their demands were not fulfilled, the FIR suggests.

Soon after 12 days, since the gangster, Aman Sahu, was shifted to Giridih Central Jail from Palamu Jail, his close aids started bullying the Jail authorities at Giridih.

Sand Ban Dilemma: Zila Parishad invites tenders amid NGT Restrictions

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

East Singhbhum Zila Parishad has recently invited tenders for the construction of 37 Anganwadi Center buildings across the district within a three-month timeframe, despite an existing ban by the National Green Tribunal (NGT) on lifting sand from rivers.

The Zila Parishad executive officer, when queried, expressed helplessness, stating that they were merely following instructions from the state's Panchayat Raj department. The officer acknowledged the challenge of constructing any building without the availability of sand, which is currently impossible due to the NGT-sponsored ban.

The lifting of sand is banned from June 10 to October 15 every year during the monsoon period, following an NGT directive aimed at preserving the environment and protecting river conditions. To enforce this directive, deputy commissioners across the country receive annual letters. The department of mining and geology is responsible for ensuring strict adherence to the ban.



In East Singhbhum, the mining department, in cooperation with local police and administration, remains vigilant against illegal sand lifting and transportation from the Subernarekha and Kharkai rivers. Numerous sand-laden dumpers and tractors have been seized in operations against the sand mafias active in the district.

The district's sand crisis, exacerbated by the NGT ban, raises questions about the timing of the Panchayat Raj department's order for constructing 37 Anganwadi centers. Manoj Kumar, the executive officer of the Zila Parishad, declined to comment on the issue. However, one of his subordinates suggested that the move was

driven by the upcoming assembly elections in Jharkhand. "The state government remained dormant for most of the past four years, but with the assembly elections approaching, it suddenly became aware of what is necessary to garner public support," observed the official, adding that similar situations are prevalent in other districts of the state.

The ban on sand lifting is a crucial measure to maintain environmental balance, particularly during the monsoon when river ecosystems are most vulnerable. Despite the logistical challenges posed by the ban, officials stress the importance of adhering to the NGT directive. The local

administration and police continue to monitor and act against illegal sand lifting activities to ensure compliance.

The tender invitation amidst the sand ban has sparked concerns among local residents and environmentalists. They worry about the potential environmental impact and the feasibility of completing construction projects without violating the NGT directive. The situation highlights the tension between developmental goals and environmental regulations, especially in the lead-up to elections. As the assembly elections draw near, the pressure on state departments to demonstrate progress and development intensifies. However, it is crucial for these efforts to be balanced with environmental considerations and regulatory compliance to ensure sustainable growth. The coming months will be telling in how the East Singhbhum Zila Parishad navigates these challenges and whether alternative solutions can be found to meet construction needs without compromising environmental integrity.

Jail inmate serving life sentence dies in Daltonganj

PNS : DALTONGANJ

A lifer of the central jail identified as Ramdeo Korwa, 78, was declared brought dead in the MMCH Daltonganj where he was rushed this Monday morning from the central jail here.

The deceased was serving a life sentence since 2021, said the superintendent of the central jail Bhagirath Karjee.

Karjee confirmed that the doctor on duty at the MMCH this Monday morning declared Korwa brought dead.

Korwa hailed from Ranka block in Garhwa district. Dr R K Ranjan of the MMCH Daltonganj who declared Korwa brought dead said diagnosis of the deceased was just impossible as he was dead already and the jail personnel who accompanied him just failed to share the deceased's health or disease history.

DAV Sector 4 prepares to host Sports Cluster Level 2024

R SHARMA : BOKARO

DAV Sector 4 campus was abuzz with excitement and meticulous preparation as it kicked off the two-day DAV Sports Cluster Level event today. The opening ceremony was a resounding success, marked by grandeur and splendor.

The ceremony began with a melodious welcome song, "Kis Tarah Naman Karoon Main Aapka," which set the tone for the day's proceedings. The chief guest, B.S. Jaiswal, along with Vipin Rai, ARO of Zone "G," and principals from various DAV schools, including R.K. Singh, S. Kumar, Stuti Sinha, and Anuradha Singh, graced the event. LMC members Brahmdev and Shashi Bhushan were also present, along with the participating athletes and visitors.

In his address, B.S. Jaiswal emphasized the significance of the event, stating, "Like every year, DAV Sector 4 is committed to fostering a strong lineup of exceptional athletes. These young players will represent India at national and international levels in the future."

The event sees participation from approximately 700 students across 10 schools, competing in various sports including football, basketball, handball, gymnastics, roller



skating, lawn tennis, boxing, and taekwondo. To ensure smooth conduct of the games, multiple courts, arenas, and fields have been set up within the school premises.

Sarwendu Shekhar Kar, the principal of DAV Sector 4, highlighted the importance of sports in his speech, saying, "Sports are a potent tool for enhancing discipline, continuous practice, patience, and self-control are the hallmarks of a skilled athlete. For a long time, DAV Sector 4 has been a solid foundation for training athletes for national competi-

tions." M.K. Sinha, ARO of Zone "B," extended his heartfelt congratulations and best wishes to S.S. Kar, Principal of DAV Sector 4, for organizing such a massive and well-coordinated event. He acknowledged the crucial roles played by sports teachers S.K. Mishra, Harinder, Rangesh, and Sushil in driving the entire event forward.

The two-day event promises to be a showcase of talent, teamwork, and the sporting spirit, further solidifying DAV Sector 4's reputation as a hub for nurturing young athletes.

JIASOWA organises Child Health Campaign

PNS : RANCHI

Jharkhand IAS Officers Wives Association (JIASOWA) organized a child health campaign on Sunday 21 July 2024 for the children of Niladari Bhawan, Jagannathpur Mausibari colony. On this occasion, children and their parents were made aware about the health of children. A team of doctors examined the children and free medicines were distributed by JIASOWA. President Lal Rinkimi Kiangte advised the children not to eat outside and stale food. It is harmful for their health. She urged to keep cleanliness around them. Children are the future of the country. Only when they are healthy, they will be able to contribute to the progress of the country in future.

Secretary Gayatri Singh said that a healthy mind resides in a healthy body. Therefore, if the health of the children is good, they will be happy and will be able to focus on their studies. Dr Jaishna gave a power point presentation and made the children aware about the good habits they should adopt for good health. On this occasion, JIASOWA President Lal Rinkimi Kiangte, Secretary Gayatri Singh, Joint Secretary Divya Srinivasan, Treasurer Yamini Kumari, Jaishna Siddiqui, Deepthi Jayaraj, Archana Muthu, Archana Trivedi, and Neelam Lalit were present.



Ensure 100% distribution of food grains in 10 days: DC



VINOD PRASAD : LOHARDAGA:

A meeting of the Supply Department was held in the Collectorate Auditorium on Monday under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner Dr. Waghmare Prasad Krishna. Paddy Procurement Plan 2023-24 was first reviewed in the meeting. In which the achievement against the target of paddy procurement, number of registered farmers, number of selected rice mills, status of payment made to farmers was reviewed in detail. NFSA in the district, distribution of food grains, gram dal

received under green ration card, status of food grain distribution in Lohardaga district in the month of July 2024, status of food grain distribution in the blocks, status of allocation received, allocation received under green ration card.

And the status of distributed food grains, status of distribution of food grains among the beneficiaries related to PVTG Postman Scheme, status of dhoti-lungi-sari distribution and other points were reviewed. The Deputy Commissioner directed the District Supply Officer to ensure 100 percent

distribution of food grains in the next 10 days and 100 percent distribution among the left out beneficiaries under the PVTG Postman Scheme. For the reason that food grains have not been received in the district blocks, a meeting was held with the transporters and instructions were given to get the allocation of food grains and distribute them. Additional Collector Jitendra Munda, District Supply Officer Gyan Shankar Jaiswal, District Agriculture Officer Shiv Pujan Ram, District Cooperative Officer and others were present in the meeting.

Jalabhishek on First Monday of Sawan



PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

On the auspicious occasion of the first Monday of Sawan, former Jharkhand BJP state spokesperson Amarpreet Singh Kale, along with his wife, performed Jalabhishek of Lord Shiva at Shri Shri Sarvajani Shiv Hanuman Mandir located in Bhuiyadh, Kalyan Nagar. The couple prayed for happiness and prosperity for all.

The temple committee organized a grand and dignified Kalash Yatra to mark the first Monday of Sawan. Devotees gathered in large numbers, participating in the sacred rituals and seeking blessings from Lord Shiva.

Kale expressed his heartfelt wishes on the holy occasion, stating, "Heartiest wishes on the first Monday of the holy month of Shravan, dedicated to Lord Shiva, a symbol of meditation. May Mahadev bless everyone's life with

happiness, peace, prosperity, and good fortune."

Several notable individuals attended the event, including Jugun Pandey, Shekhar Mukhi, Vijay Bharti, Subhash Giri, Shivnandan Sao, Niranjan Prasad, Shivdhani Sao, Nandlal, Sarada, Raja, Sanjit Bharti, Sagar Choubey, Suraj Choubey, Amit Bharti, Shubham Kumar, and Dhananjay Kumar. The presence of these community members added to the significance of the occasion.

The first Monday of Sawan holds special reverence for Lord Shiva, and the rituals performed by Kale and his wife reflect the deep devotion and cultural richness of the community. As the holy month progresses, devotees will continue to flock to temples, seeking the blessings of Lord Shiva and embracing the spiritual significance of this auspicious period.

AADHAR BIOMETRIC UPDATE CAMP AT DPS RANCHI

PNS : RANCHI

Delhi Public School Ranchi organised a Mandatory Biometric Update (MBU) camp for AADHAAR cards from 18th July to 23rd July 2024. This initiative, undertaken by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (Meity), aimed at the larger benefit of the students, specifically those in classes 11 and 12.

The camp was graced by Niraj Kumar (IRTS), Director of the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI), Regional Office, Ranchi and ex-alumni of DPS Ranchi. His presence added significant value to the event, emphasizing



ing the importance of biometric updates for the students' AADHAAR cards.

The camp was conducted during school hours. The initiative underscores the commitment of the Ministry of Electronics and Information

Technology (Meity) to streamline the biometric update process, thereby facilitating smoother identification processes for the students in the future.

The event witnessed enthusiastic participation

from the students, who understood the importance of keeping their AADHAAR information up-to-date. The biometric update will aid in ensuring the accuracy and reliability of their identification, which is crucial for various governmental and educational processes.

Niraj Kumar lauded the efforts of DPS Ranchi in organizing the camp and highlighted the benefits of the biometric update. He mentioned, "The initiative taken by Meity and the proactive involvement of DPS Ranchi will undoubtedly contribute to a more efficient and reliable identification system for the students."

Libraries in 32 Government Schools to get a boost

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

Following the directives of District Magistrate cum Deputy Commissioner Ananya Mittal, a District Level Library Committee meeting was convened in the Collectorate Auditorium. The meeting, chaired by the Deputy Development Commissioner, focused on the promotion and enhancement of libraries in 32 government schools across East Singhbhum district through the state plan.

The initiative targets several key educational institutions, including the CM School of Excellence, Block Level Adarsh Vidyalaya, Kasturba Gandhi Girls Residential School, and Model Schools. During the meeting, a district-level committee discussed and finalized the selection of books to be procured with the funds allocated for the financial year 2023-24.

Committee members, comprising the District Education Officer, District



Education Superintendent, principals from two CM Schools of Excellence, the Principal of Navodaya Vidyalaya, two students, and a President Award-winning teacher, prepared a comprehensive list of books to be supplied to the schools. The selected titles are intended to enrich the libraries and provide better learning resources for students.

Once the selection process is complete, work orders will be issued to the respective suppliers and publishers at

the district level. Payments will be managed at the state level to ensure a streamlined procurement process.

The meeting highlighted the district's commitment to improving educational resources and fostering a culture of reading and learning among students in government schools. This initiative is expected to significantly enhance the quality of education and provide students with access to a broader range of learning materials.

OPINION 6
TACKLING NEW WAVE OF TERROR IN JAMMU

WORLD 9
INTERNET DOWN IN B'DESH DESPITE CALM

MONEY 10
SENSEX, NIFTY SETTLE LOWER AHEAD OF BUDGET

Published From
DELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL BHUBANESWAR
RANCHI RAIPUR CHANDIGARH
DEHRADUN HYDERABAD VIJAYWADA

Late City Vol.17 Issue 200
*Air Surcharge Extra if Applicable

RANCHI, TUESDAY JULY 23, 2024; PAGES 12 ₹3



the pioneer

Established 1864

www.dailypioneer.com



INDIA WOMEN
TEAM EYES SEMIS
BERTH IN ASIA CUP
11 SPORTS

Economic Survey: India's GDP set to soar to seven per cent in 2024-25

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
India's GDP is likely to grow at 6.5 to 7 per cent in the current fiscal year amid global challenges which may impact exports, said Economic Survey 2023-24 tabled in Parliament on Monday. The growth projected for 2024-25 is lower than the economic growth rate of 8.2 per cent estimated for the previous financial year. The Reserve Bank has projected the GDP growth for the fiscal year ending March 2025 at 7.2 per cent.

Global agencies like IMF and ADB see India to grow at 7 per cent. "The Survey conservatively projects a real GDP growth of 6.5-7 per cent, with risks evenly balanced, cognizant of the fact that the market expectations are on the higher side," said the document tabled by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in Parliament. It said the domestic growth drivers have supported economic growth in 2023-24 despite uncertain global economic

performance. Improved balance sheets will help the private sector cater to strong investment demand. The Survey also added a note of caution saying "private capital formation after good growth in the last three years may turn slightly more cautious because of fears of cheaper imports from countries that have excess capacity". While merchandise exports are likely to increase with improving growth prospects in advanced economies, services exports are



Chief Economic Advisor V Anantha Nageswaran addresses a Press conference after tabling of the Economic Survey 2023-24 in Parliament by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, in New Delhi, on Monday

also likely to witness a further uptick. A normal rainfall forecast by the India Meteorological Department and the satisfactory spread of the southwest monsoon thus far are likely to improve the agriculture sector's performance and support the revival of rural demand, it said. However, the monsoon season still has some way to go, the Survey said. Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said the Survey highlights the prevailing strengths of the economy and identifies

areas for further growth and progress as "we move towards building a Viksit Bharat". Chief Economic Advisor V Anantha Nageswaran on Monday said a 7 per cent GDP growth rate, the upper end of the projection made in the Survey, is doable depending on monsoon and global financial risks. The Economic Survey is an annual document presented by the Government ahead of the Union Budget to review the state of the economy.



Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla being greeted by TMC MP Shatrughan Sinha after the latter took oath as a member of the House during the first day of the Parliament Session, in New Delhi, on Monday

Ahead of Budget, PM Modi slams Opposition attempt to drown his voice

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

A day before his Government is to present its first Budget in the third term, Prime Minister Narendra Modi outlined the agenda for this Session with an appeal to the Opposition to be constructive and a combative message saying some parties have practised "negative politics" and "misused" Parliament to hide their political failures. "In a democracy, there should be no place for tantrums to silence the Prime Minister for 2.5 hours, stifling his voice. It is a cause for concern that there is no remorse or regret for such actions," the Prime Minister said. His remarks were an apparent reference to the incident in the last Session when Modi delivered his reply to the debate on the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address amid vociferous protests and sloganeering by the Opposition that was demanding that both MPs from Manipur be allowed to speak. Asserting that Parliament is not for 'dal' but for 'desh', Modi said people have given their verdict in the Lok Sabha polls and now all political parties must work together for the country for the next five years. "This Parliament is not for 'dal (party)' but for 'desh (country)'. This Parliament is not limited to MPs but it is for 140 crore people of the country," the Prime Minister said. He appealed to MPs from all parties to set aside political difference and participate in discussions in



Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses the media on the first day of the Parliament Session, in New Delhi, on Monday

SC stays nameplate diktat on Kanwar Yatra path

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In an interim order, the Supreme Court on Monday stayed the directives issued by the Governments of Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand directing eateries along the Kanwar Yatra route to display names of owners, the staff and other details "to ensure... no confusion among kanwariyas" but said they will be required to display the kind of food they are selling to the Kanwariyas. The bench of Justices Hrishikesh Roy and SVN Bhatti passed the interim order while issuing notice to the Governments of Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Madhya Pradesh, where the



Supreme Court

Ujjain municipal body has issued a similar directive, on a batch of petitions challenging the Government directives. The order comes amid an escalating row over the

directives, as the Opposition has alleged that the orders were "communal and divisive" and intended to target Muslims and Scheduled Castes by forcing them to reveal their identity, but the BJP maintained that the step has been taken keeping in mind law and order issues and the religious sentiments of pilgrims. The bench, however, clarified that the eateries should display the type of food they are serving like they are vegetarian or non-vegetarian. No one appeared for the State Governments in the apex court on Monday. The month of Shrawan starts from July 22 this year and lasts till August 19.

Temperatures sizzle in LS over NEET

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

The first day of the Monsoon Budget Session on Monday witnessed the ruling party and Opposition members face off over the NEET and NTA row with Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi demanding immediate resignation of Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan who in turn said he is on the post "at the mercy of his leader (Prime Minister Narendra Modi)" and that the Government is "collectively answerable". While Opposition called the current entrance examination system "rubbish", Centre asserted there have been no evidence of entrance exam paper leaks in last seven years. Rahul carried on with his scathing attacks. "It's obvious to the whole country that there is a very serious problem in our examination system. The Minister has blamed everybody except himself. I don't even think he

understands the fundamentals of what is going on here," the Congress leader said. Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav said this Government will create new records in paper leaks. "Students across the country are protesting. Investigation is leading to revelations, arrests are being made. I have only one request, students will not get justice if this Minister continues," he said. In response, Pradhan said the results have been made public as per the Supreme Court's directions. "I don't want to do politics, but I have a list of how many paper leaks happened when Akhilesh was in charge (as Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister)," he said. Hitting back, Pradhan said he has the support of the people in his constituency and does not need a certification of intelligence from anyone in Parliament. "Lies will not become truth if you shout. The country's examination system has been

called rubbish. There cannot be a more unfortunate statement by the Leader of the Opposition. I condemn this," said Pradhan in the thick of storm ever since irregularities in the NEET followed by UGC-NET have been reported. A cornered Pradhan then took a "remote control" jab—a swipe the BJP routinely uses to target the Manmohan Singh Government. "In 2010, three Bills for education reforms had been introduced by their Minister Kapil Sibal. One of them was to prohibit unfair practices. What was their problem? Under whose pressure was that Bill withdrawn. Was it due to the pressure of private medical colleges? And they are asking us questions" he said. Responding to the Opposition's allegations, the Minister said the NTA has conducted more than 240 exams and over 5 crore students have appeared in them.

JALABHISHEK ON SAAWAN KA PEHLA SOMVAR



Devotees arrive to perform 'Jalabhishek' ritual on the first Monday of Sawaan month, at Kedar Ghat in Varanasi, on Monday

Bihar's demand for Special Status suffers setback

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The NDA partner JD(U)'s "pressure" on Centre over demand of Special Status to Bihar came down crashing after the Government on Monday cited an inter-Ministerial group report prepared in 2012 to assert that a case for granting special category status to Bihar is not made out. The BJP's allies from Bihar demanded the status for the backward State. In a written reply in the Lok Sabha on the first day of the Monsoon Session, Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary said Special Category Status was granted in the past by the National Development Council (NDC) to some States which were characterised by a number of features necessitating special consideration. These included hilly and difficult terrain, low population density or sizeable share of tribal population, strategic location along borders with neighbouring countries, economic and infrastructural backwardness and non-viable nature of state finances, he said in reply to a question asked by JD(U) member Rampreet Mandal. The decision was taken based on an integrated



Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar

consideration of all the factors listed above and the peculiar situation of a State, the Minister said. "Earlier, the request of Bihar for Special Category Status was considered by an Inter-Ministerial Group (IMG) which submitted its Report on March 30, 2012. The IMG came to the finding that based on existing NDC criteria, the case for Special Category Status for Bihar is not made out," the Minister said. The Congress-led UPA was in power at the time. JD(U) leader Sanjay Kumar Jha had voiced his party's demand for the status at an all-party meeting on Sunday.

Hot chase to neutralise Pak terrorists

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Close on the heels of the high-level security review meeting, chaired by Army Chief General Upendra Dwivedi to chalk out a strategy to flush out Pakistani terrorists occupying 'Jammu Heights', a heavily armed group of terrorists launched two more frontal attacks on an Army post and the house of the Shaurya Chakra awardee in the Gunda village of Khawas tehsil in the frontier Rajouri district in the wee hours of Monday. Following these fresh attacks, the entire security grid has been alerted to conduct a fresh audit of the security arrangements given the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Drass to participate in the Kargil Vijay Diwas celebrations marking 25 years of Victory in the Kargil war. The Village Defence Group member Parshotam Kumar remained unscathed in the attack while one of his close relatives received minor injuries during the firing incident. It is the first such attempt in recent months where terrorists brazenly targeted a member of the village defence guard. Official sources claimed the foreign terrorists were reportedly briefed about the presence of Shaurya Chakra awardee in the village and local over-ground workers must have shared the exact coordinates with the terrorists to target him. Kumar was bestowed the Shaurya Chakra, the peacetime equivalent of war's Vir Chakra by the



Army personnel during an encounter with terrorists in Gunda area of Rajouri district on Monday

President of India on July 5 in New Delhi. According to the citation, "Last year in August 2023, Kumar, armed with an outmoded, inferior rifle had taken on two highly trained guerrilla warfare terrorists of the PAFF-Jaish, who were equipped with sophisticated assault rifles and grenades. Unmindful of his safety, he tailed the two terrorists and (displaying)

raw courage and excellent field craft, he closed in on the terrorists and engaged them from a close distance. He maintained contact with the other till (security) forces closed in. His brave act led to the neutralisation of one foreign terrorist." Soon after thwarting the terror attack a hot chase was launched by the joint team of security forces to

track down the footprints of terrorists. Special forces were also inducted in the ongoing operations spread across the thickly forested area. In a post on X, White Knight Corps said, "Terrorists attacked the house of a VDC at Gunda, Rajouri at 3.10 am. A nearby Army column reacted and a firefight ensued. In another update the White Knight Corps posted on X, "Indian Army acted on intelligence, anticipating the threat to a Village Defence Guard in a remote area in Rajouri - Reasi. Tactical teams swiftly intervened, ensuring no harm to the VDC member and his family. Operations are continuing and a firefight is in progress". Additional troops remained stationed in the area during the day to instil confidence among the fear-stricken residents. The villagers also raised the demand to equip the local village defence guards with modern weapons to tackle the growing threat of terrorist violence in the remote areas of the Jammu region. To counter the growing threat of terrorism in the Jammu region the Indian Army has already inducted more than 3,000 troops and 500 para commandos to launch massive combing operations to neutralise Pakistani terrorists active in the area. According to a preliminary assessment over 50 Pakistani terrorists have infiltrated inside the Indian territory to launch targeted strikes on the security forces.



Students and others are seen within the precinct of the Supreme Court during a hearing on a batch of petitions related to the controversy-ridden medical entrance exam NEET-UG 2024, in New Delhi on Monday

SC asks IIT Delhi to examine issue of NEET correct answer

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday asked the Director, IIT-Delhi to set up a team of three experts that would go into a particular question of Physics asked in the NEET-UG 2024 examination and submit a report on the correct answer by Tuesday noon. The top court's order to IIT Delhi to set up a team of three domain experts to examine the issue of the correct answer to a question came at the fag end of the day-long hearing on a batch of petitions including those which are seeking a re-test of the controversy-ridden NEET-UG on grounds of question paper-leak and other malpractices. A bench headed by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud asked the petitioners seeking re-test to show with the help of data released by the National Testing Agency (NTA), which holds the examination, that there was a "systemic failure" in its conduct, and the paper leak was "widespread" and not restricted to Patna and Hazaribagh only.

Govt to provide 'Samman Rashi' to women between 21-50 years of age

CM gifts schemes worth Rs 88.38 Cr in Sahibganj district

PNS : RANCHI
Chief Minister Hemant Soren today said that the state government has decided to give Samman Rashi (Honorarium) to women between 21 and 50 years of age. For this, special camps will be set up across the state very soon to take applications from the beneficiaries. We are working with the resolve to empower the women of the state, he said.

The CM was addressing the inauguration-foundation stone laying and asset distribution ceremony among the beneficiaries organized at Rajmahal in Sahibganj district today.

On this occasion, the CM inaugurated-laid the foundation stone of 34 develop-

ment schemes worth about 88 crore 84 lakhs. This includes the foundation stone laying of 31 schemes worth about 86 crore 80 lakhs and the inauguration of three schemes. At the same time, in the programs organized at Rajmahal and Barhet, assets worth more than 38 crore 80 lakh rupees were distributed among 10 thousand 141 beneficiaries with the aim of empowering them.

The CM said that there are immense possibilities of development in the state of Jharkhand. Our government has added many dimensions in this direction and work is being done to add many new dimensions. The welfare schemes of the government are reaching the people. We are moving forward with full



Chief Minister Hemant Soren hands over assets to beneficiaries during the foundation laying stone ceremony and inauguration of various development projects in Sahibganj district of Jharkhand on Monday. PNS

strength towards strength- ening the infrastructure. He

assured the public that the process of improving and

moving the state forward will continue. On this occa-

sion, the CM congratulated the people of the state on the commencement of Shravani month and the first Monday.

The CM said that work should not be done just for show but people should get its benefits for a long time. Our government is making plans with this thought. Our schemes are to empower you and your future generations. He said that only when the people of the state are empowered, our society and state will progress.

The CM said that our government is fully committed to the all-round development of the state. Every section and class of the society is getting the benefit of the schemes and policies that our government is making. With the cooperation of all of you, we will make this

state so strong that we will not need to depend on anyone.

The CM said that even today there are many problems in our state. We are going through many challenges. But, we are continuously working to solve all these problems as soon as possible. He asked the people to make collective efforts to get rid of the problems.

The CM said that the Rajmahal area has a different identity in many ways. Apart from being a historical and religious area, there are immense possibilities of tourism here. This is the only area of Jharkhand through which the river Ganga passes. Various commercial activities have been going on here for a long time. All the resources here are being

used by someone else while this area and its people are still very backward. This area is still suffering from many problems. Our government is continuously trying to solve these problems. Work is being done to stop the erosion of the Ganga. We are trying to bring ease in transportation. A plan to build an airstrip and ropeway in the Rajmahal area is being considered, so that it can get a different identity in terms of tourism.

Many officials including Rajmahal MP Vijay Kumar Hansda, MLA Anant Ojha, Additional Chief Secretary to the Chief Minister Avinash Kumar, Deputy Commissioner and Superintendent of Police of the district were present in this program.

CM INAUGURATES GRID SUB-STATION, TRANSMISSION LINE IN BARHAIT

PNS : RANCHI

Chief Minister Hemant Soren today said that the availability of energy to every home, electricity to every home is the priority of his government. He said that it was our resolution that there should be adequate electricity facilities not only in the city but also in the villages. For a long time, the villagers living in the Barhet area were suffering from the problem of electricity, today their government is solving it.

Today, in the presence of all of you, the Barhait electricity sub-station grid has been formally inaugurated. The CM was addressing the inauguration of 132/33 KV Grid Sub-Station (Barhet) and 132 KV (Pakur-Rajmahal) double path LILo transmission line and inauguration-foundation laying and asset distribution program of various schemes organized at Singa Maidan under Barhet block of Sahibganj district today.

The CM said that not only the power grid has been inaugurated here but the state government has also given a big gift to our poor, rural people of the state, who are economically weak. Now the state government is also pro-



Chief Minister Hemant Soren distributes assets among beneficiaries during foundation laying stone ceremony and inauguration of various development projects in Sahibganj district of Jharkhand on Monday. PNS

viding 200 units of electricity free of cost to the people of Jharkhand. He said that complaints come from many places that there is no meter installed in someone's house, yet the electricity bill is coming and they are not getting the benefit of 200 units. We will resolve all these complaints soon.

A decision will be taken on this in the cabinet meeting to be held on the coming 24th. So that all the electricity related problems of the people of the state can be solved. The

Chief Minister said that this is not just an inauguration but the officials of the electricity department have been instructed that this grid sub-station should operate smoothly. There should be a strong arrangement to ensure that there is minimal breakdown in the grid sub-station. There should not be any kind of hindrance in this and there should not be a situation of breakdown.

The CM said that the "Aapki Sarkar-Aapke Dwar" program is going to be

launched again. Soon our government will give honorarium to eligible women above 21 years and below 50 years of age from families living below the poverty line. About 40 lakh women will come under the purview of this scheme and they will get the benefits of the scheme. He said that very soon a race will be organized for police recruitment. Its preparation has been done. Lakhs of applications have been received for constable recruitment, its recruitment will also start. A few days ago, 1500 teachers have been given appointment letters. The CM said that the process of appointment is being taken forward by removing the obstacles very fast. The process of giving appointment will continue.

The CM said that 'Shivgadi' located in Rajmahal is known as a religious tourist place. During Shravani Mela, devotees come here and they offer water to Mahadev by traveling a long distance. The state government has decided that there should be a ropeway along with stairs here, so that more devotees join here and this place can be known as a famous tourist place in the

country. In the coming time, this religious place will be covered with high level facilities.

On this occasion, the CM inaugurated 132/33 KV grid sub-station of 100 MVA capacity and 132 KV double path LILo transmission line at a cost of Rs 7064 lakh. At the same time, he inaugurated and laid the foundation stone of a total of 5 schemes worth Rs 16581.866 lakh. In this, inauguration of Rs 7064 lakh and foundation stone of 4 schemes worth Rs 9517.866 lakh was laid. The CM distributed assets worth Rs 3880.955 lakh among a total of 1039 beneficiaries in Rajmahal and Barhet blocks.

On this occasion, Rajmahal MP Vijay Kumar Hansda, former minister Hemlal Murmu, District Council President Monika Kisku, Additional Chief Secretary to the Chief Minister Avinash Kumar, Managing Director of Jharkhand Energy Transmission Corporation KK Verma, Commissioner Santhal Pargana Division Lalchand Dadel along with senior officials of the district administration and a large number of other people were present.

Month-long Shravani mela begins in Deoghar

PNS : RANCHI

The month-long Shravani Mela started in Deoghar on Sunday, as devotees gathered to offer Baahy Argha. With an increase in the expected number of devotees at the fair (mela) this year, tight security has been arranged to secure the area, as per reports.

The fair was inaugurated at Dumma at the state's border with Bihar with the State Agriculture Minister Dipika Pandey Singh and Drinking and Sanitation Department Minister Mithilesh Thakur performing the rituals.

Though the fair was inaugurated on Sunday, the holy month of Sawan started from Monday. Lakhs of Shiv devotees will bow their heads in front of Lord Shiva. They will receive blessings of happiness, prosperity and well-being. This year's Sawan is very special in many ways. It is special because there will be five Mondays in the 29-day Sawan. The first Monday will be on 22 July, the second on 29 July, the third on 5 August, the fourth on 12 August and the fifth on 19 August. In these 29 days, many auspicious yogas including Sarvarth Siddhi Yoga, Shiv Vaas, Amrit Siddhi Yoga, Preeti Yoga are also going to be formed.

Shiv devotees will be able to offer water to the Shivaling through Argha. At the same time, the price of the Shrigdarshanam coupon has



been increased by Rs 100. Now Shrigdarshanam coupons will be available for Rs 600. Last year its price was Rs 500. Through this coupon, Shiv devotees will be able to reach the sanctum sanctorum of the temple in less time. During the State Shravani Fair, VIP, VVIP and out of term darshan will be completely closed.

More than 35 lakh devotees from across the country and abroad attend one of the biggest socio-religious festivals every year during the Sawan month, according to reports. To accommodate this huge population, the state government has reportedly made elaborate arrangements. The Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren also assessed the situation on Saturday before the fair to ensure safety in Deoghar. The officials were conveyed to make convenience, security, cleanliness and hospitality a priority at the fair by the CM. He reportedly said that the devotees visiting the fair

should return with good memories and should have access to all the facilities like drinking water, accommodation, toilet, health, parking, electricity and information system.

He stressed ensuring convenience, security, cleanliness, and hospitality to create a positive experience for the visiting devotees. Soren instructed those essential facilities such as drinking water, accommodation, toilets, health services, parking, electricity, and information systems be fully operational.

The state government has made comprehensive arrangements for this major socio-religious event, which draws over 3.5 million devotees from India and abroad during the holy month of Shrawan.

Thousands of devotees embark on a 105-km pilgrimage from Sultanganj, Bihar to Baidyanath Temple in Jharkhand to offer Ganga water to the Jyotirlinga in Deoghar.

Police nab shooter involved in former Councillor's killing

PNS : RANCHI

The criminal who shot former councillor Ved Prakash has been arrested by the police. The police team has arrested shooter Rahul Jaiswal from Ghazipur, Uttar Pradesh. He is being questioned.

In the initial interrogation, Rahul has told the police that he had received only six thousand rupees as the first installment for shooting. In this incident, the entire shooting was planned by a person named Dheeraj Mishra and Satyam Pathak. Ved Prakash was shot over a five-year-old dispute.

Unknown criminals shot former councillor Ved Prakash Singh on July 7 near Dhurwa bus stand. After which he was admitted to Paras Hospital in an injured state. On July 7, late in the evening, bike-riding criminals shot former councillor Ved Prakash near Dhurwa bus stand in Dhurwa police station area. Ved Prakash has been shot in the chest and neck. After carrying out the incident, the criminals fled leaving the weapon on the spot.



SSP Ranchi Chandan Kumar Sinha alongwith City SP Rajkumar Meta during a press conference in Ranchi on Monday. Pix by Ratan Lal

Labour Minister inaugurates Ultra-modern burn unit at Devnika Hospital

PNS : RANCHI

On the occasion of the first Monday of the pious Sawan month, Devnika Hospital and Research Centre's Ultra-Modern burn unit was inaugurated by Minister for Industries and Labour, Satyanand Bhokta.

The minister took a detailed tour of the hospital with the chairman Dr Anant Sinha. He appreciated the efforts taken to bring out all minor details particularly in cardiology (cath lab and cardiac OT), Neurosurgery, Nephrology, Gastroenterology and above all Plastic, Reconstructive and Burn care.

He was delighted to witness the first Craniofacial unit of eastern India comprising Neurosurgery, Plastic Surgery, Ophthalmology, ENT and Dental services under one roof.



He was very impressed with the state of the art 15 bedded Burn unit and that it would be managed by a team of Plastic surgeons.

Dr Anant Sinha, Chairman, stressed that Devnika is the only hospital which can cater to all sorts of trauma as besides, ortho, neuro, gastro it also has Burns and Plastic surgery. He further said that the hospital is designed to cater to the poorest and the most affluent of the society under one roof.

The hospital is managed by doctors themselves hence the quality is of the highest standards and the cost is reasonable.

If the government permits we are committed to support all government programmes like Ayushman Bharat, ESI, CAPF, ECHS and BPL cases. Kishore Mantri Chairman, FJCCI was present with all his executive body team members and took a detailed tour of the hospital and its facilities. He appreciated the

special efforts taken by team Devnika for the safety, prevention and treatment of industrial workers. He assured of full support from Chamber of commerce and industries

Special Invitee Sushant Gaurav IAS, Director Industries, Minister Satyanand Bhokta assured of all help from the government. Senior most plastic surgeon of the state Dr Ajoy Kumar Singh emphasized the importance of Plastic surgery. As it is close to World Plastic surgery day, he informed the gathering that plastic surgery works from head to toe.

Also present in the gathering were Dr Raj Kumar Pathak, Senior Plastic surgeon & Director Burns and Trauma, Devkamal group and Dr Tanmay Prasad, consultant Plastic surgeon were coordinating the programme and welcomed the guests.

63rd pre-Subroto Cup Football Competition concludes

PNS : RANCHI

The 63rd Pre-Subroto Cup Football Competition 2024-25 organised in Khelgaon, Ranchi concluded on July 22. As the chief guest for the closing-in cum prize distribution ceremony, Secretary of the State Government's School Education and Literacy Department Umashankar Singh, awarded the winning participants and encouraged the other participants taking part in the game.

Jharkhand Education Project Director Aditya Ranjan, former SAI Director cum International Football Coach Sushil Kumar Verma, State Program Officer Dhruzen Soreng also attended the closing-in prize distribution ceremony.

In the final of the 63rd Pre-Subroto Cup Football Competition 2024-25, the Kolhan Division team became the champion in the under-15 boys category competition. In the final match between North Chotanagpur and Santal Division, Kolhan defeated Santal by 4-3. Emmanuel of Kolhan Division received the Man of the Match award, Krishna Samad of Kolhan team received the Man of the Series award.



In the under-17 boys category final competition, Santal Paragana division won by defeating Kolhan by 1-0. In the under-17 boys category Ayush Kisku of North Chotanagpur division got the Best Goalkeeper award. In the under-17 girls category, South Chotanagpur division defeated North Chotanagpur division by 2-0 and won the title of the tournament. Lali Kumari got the Man of the Match award whereas Anushka Kumari got the Man of the Series award and Anisha Oraon got the Best Goalkeeper award.

Cong MP Sukhdev Bhagat raises Sarna religious code issue in LS

PNS : RANCHI

Lohardaga MP Sukhdev Bhagat today raised the demand for the Sarna dharma code to be included in the census during the Question Hour of Monsoon session which started today. Bhagat said that demand for Sarna religious code is a very sensitive and tribal identity issue. Crores of tribals live in India. Tribals who are worshippers of nature are not counted by the government. On one hand, the government counts wild animals, birds, noises but does not count the religious identity of the tribals. "I appeal that Sarna religion code should be marked in the



census column to protect the religious identity of the tribals and their identity," said Bhagat.

In 2020, the Jharkhand assembly had passed a resolution demanding the Sarna dharma code to be included in the census and submitted it to the Centre via the state

governor. The Centre is yet to take a call on the contentious issue. Soren leads a JMM-Congress-RJD (Rashtriya Janata Dal) coalition government in the state.

In 2023, Soren had also written letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi seeking recognition of Sarna religious code for tribals. In the three-page letter, Soren had stressed that the population of tribals in the State has declined from 38% to 26% in the last eight decades.

He also said that decline in the population would have an adverse effect on the policies of tribal development under the Fifth and Sixth Schedule of the Constitution.

This is not the first time that Bhagat has raised the demand for Sarna religious code, Sukhdev Bhagat of Congress, who was elected as MP from Lohardaga parliamentary seat, had even taken oath as member of parliament in a unique way on the first day of the Parliament session. Sukhdev Bhagat took oath of office and secrecy by taking the name of Sarna instead of saying Ishwar. It is worth mentioning that Sukhdev Bhagat had promised in the elections that he would raise his voice in the House on the first day of the Parliament session itself for the demand of Sarna Dharma Code.

Three newly elected MLAs take oath in Himachal



PTI ■ SHIMLA

Himachal Pradesh Vidhan Sabha Speaker Kuldeep Singh Pathania on Monday administered oath to the three newly elected legislators, including Kamlesh Thakur, the wife of Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu. The oath ceremony was conducted inside the House in the presence of the chief minister, leader of the opposition, cabinet ministers and other members. The members who took oath included Congress MLAs Kamlesh Thakur from the Dehra assembly seat, Hardeep Singh Bawa from the Nalagarh seat and BJP legislator Ashish Sharma from the Hamirpur assembly constituency. With the induction of the three MLAs, the House is complete with 68 members and the strength of Congress has risen to 40 while BJP has 28 members in the legislative assembly. There is no independent MLA in the Vidhan Sabha for the first time in the history of Himachal Pradesh. Also, this is the first time a couple, CM Sukhu and his wife Kamlesh Thakur, are members of

the same House. The by-elections for the three seats — Dehra, Nalagarh and Hamirpur — were held on July 10 following the acceptance of the resignation of three independent MLAs, Hoshiyar Singh, K L Thakur and Ashish Sharma. The three independents along with six Congress rebels had voted in favour of the BJP nominee Harsh Mahajan in the Rajya Sabha polls held on February 27. On March 22, the three independent MLAs submitted their resignation and joined the BJP the next day. However, their resignation was accepted by the speaker on June 3. The three Independents were given tickets by the BJP from their respective seats but Ashish Sharma was the only MLA to retain his seats while the other two lost the by-polls to Congress rivals. Talking to the media persons here, CM Sukhu accused the BJP of hatching a conspiracy to destabilise the government by horse-trading. In his response, leader of opposition Jai Ram Thakur accused the Congress government of winning the by-polls by

misusing the official machinery. Sukhu hoped that the BJP would now shun the negative politics and cooperate with the government in pursuing the development agenda. "The people of the state have rejected the politics of toppling the elected government through money power and shown the mirror to the BJP," the chief minister said. The BJP forced the by-polls and created political turmoil and as a result, the government could not implement a developmental agenda after passing the budget due to implementation of a model code of conduct, he added. Reiterating the resolve of the state government to make the state self-sufficient, Sukhu said the Congress government was forced to raise loans to pay the interest and instalment of loans taken by the previous BJP government headed by Jai Ram Thakur. He claimed that due to prudent policies of the government, the financial condition of the state has improved by 20 per cent. Thakur said, "The BJP snatched the Rajya Sabha seat, Mandi Lok Sabha seat and three out of nine assembly seats increasing its tally in Vidhan Sabha to 28." "We accept the verdict of the people but the results would have been different if the three by-elections caused by the resignation of the Independent legislatures were held simultaneously with six bypolls and Lok Sabha polls," he said. Earlier, six assembly seats fell vacant following the disqualification of Congress rebels for defying the whip to vote in favour of the Congress during the budget. These Congress MLAs had also voted in favour of the BJP candidate in the Rajya Sabha polls.

Dams in Karnataka filled to the brim due to torrential rain

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Most of the dams in Karnataka are filled to the brim, thanks to the torrential rains in the catchment areas of the major rivers for the past few days. The coastal and Malnad region in the Western Ghats have been receiving incessant rains for the past 15 days due to which many rivers originating from here are in spate. According to the Karnataka State Natural Disaster Monitoring Centre (KSNDMC), the inflow of water in the Cauvery basin was 98,577 cusecs while the outflow was 70,645 cusecs. The KSNDMC said the cumulative outflow since June 1, was 118.25 thousand million cubic (TMC) feet, while the outflow was 41.52 TMC ft. The Krishna Raja Sagar (KRS) dam with a reservoir level of 124 ft presently has 123.2 ft water. As on Monday, the inflow was 60,016 cusecs and outflow 52,020 cusecs. Other dams in the Cauvery basin namely Harangi, Hemavathi and Kabini are also filled to the brim. The rains in the Cauvery basin have been received at a time when Karnataka was worried with the scanty rainfall and was gearing up for a legal battle with neighbouring Tamil Nadu. The Cauvery Water Regulation Committee had directed Karnataka to release



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

one TMC ft water to neighbouring Tamil Nadu till July-end. The Chief Minister convened an all-party meeting on July 14 saying that it will not be able to meet the direction and was preparing to approach the Cauvery Water Management Authority with a request that it will release 8,000 cusecs water and not 11,500 cusecs water, which is one TMC. After visiting the KRS Dam, Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar who holds the Water Resources portfolio, said the CWRC had directed the state to release 20 TMC water starting from July 11 till month-end. "The rain God is merciful to us and Mother Cauvery is flowing gently. Already 30 TMC water has flown to Biligundlu in Tamil Nadu at the Karnataka border. Our dams are completely full and we are releasing water," Shivakumar said. e also said that 51,000 cusecs

water is being released to Tamil Nadu. In a normal year, we have to release 40.14 TMC ft of water. Karnataka will be able to release the requisite water to Tamil Nadu, Shivakumar said. This apart, channels will be opened to fill 1,657 tanks in the Cauvery basin. Dams in the Krishna river basin namely Bhadra, Tungbhadra, Ghataprabha, Malaprabha, Almatti and Narayanapura are almost filled up and water is being released from these dams. These six dams have a gross capacity of 422.45 TMC while on Monday there was a storage of 312.96 TMC. Last year, the storage was 129.59 TMC water on this day. Three hydel project dams Linganamakki, Supa and Varahi and Vani Vilas Sagar too are completely filled up. The major dams in Karnataka with a gross water holding capacity of 895.62 TMC have gross storage of 615.20 TMC.

Telangana CM meets Cong top brass in Delhi

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy on Monday met Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra HERE, and invited them to a public meeting in Warangal focused on the state's farm debt waiver programme. At the meeting, which comes close on the heels of the state government initiating the first phase of its loan waiver scheme on July 18, Reddy emphasised the symbolic importance of Warangal. Since the farm-loan waiver was promised by the Congress at a campaign rally in Warangal during the Assembly polls, the party's state unit plans to hold a public meeting there to highlight its implementation, sources said. They said the chief minister may also call on former Congress president Rahul Gandhi for the proposed public meeting at Warangal. The Telangana government has already credited Rs 6,098 crore to farmers' bank accounts, covering loans up to Rs 1 lakh in the initial phase. The scheme is set to unroll in three stages, with the second phase targeting loans up to Rs 1.5 lakh by July-end, and the final phase covering loans up to Rs 2 lakh in August. In a separate engagement, Reddy also met Union Jai Shakti Minister C R Patil, seeking central funds for the Musi River Beautification Project.

Woman to get ₹5 lakh compensation 20 years after needle left in her body after surgery

PTI ■ BENGALURU

A Bengaluru based woman has been awarded a compensation of Rs five lakh by a consumer forum, nearly 20 years after a 3.2 centimetre surgical needle was left in her body following her surgery at a private hospital here. The Karnataka State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission has directed the hospital and two doctors to pay Padmavathi, a resident of Jayanagar, Rs 50,000 as litigation expenses. It has also directed New India Assurance Co Ltd, which had issued a policy covering the hospital expenses, to pay her Rs five lakh for "the professional and medical negligence caused." The then 32-year-old woman underwent the surgery on September 29, 2004 at the Deepak Hospital, with the two doctors allegedly performing the



hernia operation. On completion of the surgery, her appendix was also removed, according to the Commission's order last month. Immediately, on the next day, she complained of severe pain for which she was prescribed some pain killers and assured that it is post surgery discomfort and

that it will get cured. She suffered acute stomach and back pain for several years and was also admitted in the same hospital twice later, the order noted. Padmavathi later approached another private hospital here in 2010 and during a scan, it was noticed that some foreign body existed in the abdominal

and back portion of her body and it was suggested to her to get it (surgical needle) removed. She then underwent surgery and the 3.2 cm surgical needle was removed following which she approached the consumer forum with a complaint the following year. The forum noted that the complainant was aged about 32 years, when she underwent all these surgeries and removal of the surgical needle. "Definitely she suffered severe pain and inconvenience till removal of the surgical needle," the order stated. Hence, she is entitled to get "global compensation" of Rs five lakh and the insurance company (New India Assurance Company Limited) is directed to pay the amount while the two doctors are liable to pay litigation expenses of Rs 50,000 to the complainant, it further added.

Rain pummels Vidarbha, more than 700 houses damaged, villagers evacuated

PTI ■ NAGPUR

More than 700 houses were damaged, and several roads were inundated as rains pummelled Maharashtra's Vidarbha over the weekend, and intermittent spells continued in the region on Monday. In Chandrapur, seven gates of the Irai Dam were opened by one metre as incessant showers lashed the district in the morning. According to officials, 740 houses were damaged, particularly in villages in Chandrapur, in the last 48 hours. Water entered houses in Chichpalli village in Chandrapur after the retaining wall of a nullah developed cracks. At least 33 roads were blocked due to waterlogging in Gadchiroli district, and five were gradually opened as water started receding in the morning, officials said.



More than 100 people were evacuated from Asgaon (Paoni tehsil), Opara and Dholsar villages in Lakhandur tehsil of Bhandara district on Sunday night and shifted to temporary shelters. Heavy rains pounded Paoni and Lakhandur for more than two hours, resulting in

waterlogging, and residents were in danger, district disaster management officer Abhishek Naamdasa said. A district search and rescue team evacuated villagers and sent them to temporary shelters, the official said. As a preventive measure, the SDRF is on standby, and collector Yogesh

Kumbhejkar was monitoring the situation, it was stated. The weather department has issued orange and yellow alerts for the region, warning of thunderstorms accompanied by lightning at a few places in Nagpur, Wardha, Chandrapur and Amravati for the next two to five days. According to the regional meteorological centre, Nagpur recorded 43 mm rainfall in 24 hours ending 8.30 am on Monday. The department has forecast thunderstorms with lightning and light to moderate rainfall at isolated places over Wardha, Nagpur, Gadchiroli, Bhandara, Gondia and Chandrapur districts. The Regional Meteorological Centre has issued an orange alert for Bhandara and Gondia for Monday and a yellow alert for Nagpur, Wardha, Chandrapur, Gadchiroli, Amravati, Akola, Yavatmal and Buldhana.

Nipah: Contact list of deceased boy updated, more tests being conducted

PTI ■ KOZHIKODE

The number of people at risk for contracting Nipah in the contact list of the 14-year-old boy who lost his life to the rare infection, has been increased to 350, out of which 101 are in the high-risk category, Health Minister Veena George said on Monday. The Kerala Health Department is waiting for the test results of 13 people, whose samples were sent to the Kozhikode Medical College virology laboratory and the Advanced Virology Institute at Thiruvananthapuram for testing. "Out of the samples sent for testing, six of the persons have symptoms. Three of them are on the secondary contact list. Even though the parents of the deceased boy do not have symptoms, we have sent their samples also for testing to rule out all possibilities," she said. The health department said two of the persons on the contact list are from Palakkad, while four are from Thiruvananthapuram. The two from Palakkad are working in a private hospital, while the four from Thiruvananthapuram have



reached Perinthalmanna for treatment. The minister added that the friends of the deceased child have informed them that he had consumed a fruit from a nearby property in Pandikkad panchayat, where the presence of bats has been detected. The 14-year-old boy from Kerala's Malappuram who was under treatment here for Nipah infection died on Sunday morning. Minister George said counselling will be given to the friends of the deceased child to help them cope with his loss, and that their classes will be held online. The department has released a detailed route map of the boy's movements and has asked the people who are suspected to have come into contact with him to contact the health department and seek treatment.

Karnataka Govt to issue guidelines to malls following denial of entry to farmer due to his attire

PTI ■ KARNATAKA

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar on Monday said the government will issue guidelines to malls and other establishments, in the wake of a farmer being denied entry because of his attire. The government on July 18 ordered closure of the G T World mall here for seven days after the incident, which drew strong condemnation from members cutting across party lines in the Legislative Assembly. It had also termed the alleged insult to the farmer as

infringement of "dignity and self respect" of an individual, and said it cannot be tolerated. "There had been discussion last week in the Assembly over a farmer from a village being denied entry into a mall owing to his attire -- wearing a 'panche' (dhoti) -- which is our cultural attire. Following the incident, orders were issued for its closure. We have also decided to issue guidelines in this regard, whether it is a mall or any other place -- small or big. 'Panche' is part of our culture," Shivakumar told the Assembly on Monday.

He said: "notice was issued to the mall for its closure; they also had some tax dues, we have taken a written explanation from them and also apology. They (mall) have also given a cheque to pay the tax dues. To ensure that such incidents don't repeat anywhere in the state, we will issue guidelines." "The mall had tax dues to the tune of Rs two crore; they had paid in between; some amount was pending to be paid for which July 31 was the last date; we have taken cheque from them and we are allowing them (to operate)," Shivakumar added.

The incident reportedly happened on July 16 when septuagenarian Fakeerappa from Haveri district visited the mall along with his wife and son to watch a movie at a multiplex. Fakeerappa was reportedly wearing white shirt and 'panche' (dhoti), and the security staffer at the mall allegedly told him and his son that he won't be allowed inside in a 'panche', and to "wear trousers and come." JD(S) floor leader C B Suresh Babu requested the Deputy Chief Minister to bring private clubs too under the guidelines.

Mahayuti allies free to go solo in elections to local bodies: Ajit

PTI ■ PUNE

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar has said the Mahayuti constituents, including the NCP led by him, are free to contest local bodies elections independently. Addressing Nationalist Congress Party workers in Pimpri Chinchwad city on Sunday, he argued that independent contests would help strengthen the cadres. "Even though we are allies in Lok Sabha and state assembly, Mahayuti members are free to contest local bodies polls independently," he said. The schedule for elections to local bodies, which include municipal councils, nagar panchayats and zilla parishads, is not yet announced.

The ruling Mahayuti alliance includes Shiv Sena led by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, BJP, and the NCP led by Ajit Pawar. Notably, Ajit Pawar's assertion on going solo in the local bodies elections came days after a Marathi weekly linked to the RSS blamed Ajit Pawar-led NCP's alliance with BJP for adverse public sentiments against the saffron party, leading to the BJP's Sabha polls in Maharashtra. The report said BJP members and other individuals expressed disapproval of the party's decision to join forces with the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), which became an ally in the Shiv Sena-BJP government in the state in July 2023. Meanwhile, Ajit Pawar denied stopping his estranged uncle and Rajya Sabha

member Sharad Pawar from speaking at a Pune District Planning and Development Committee (DPDC) meeting held on Saturday. Baramati MP Supriya Sule had claimed that Ajit Pawar had objected to her father asking questions about the disbursement of development funds at the meeting. She claimed Ajit Pawar had cited a GR (Government Resolution) and said MPs and MLAs cannot ask questions about fund disbursement or vote during these meetings as they are only invitees. Sharad Pawar had attended the meeting in his capacity as a Rajya Sabha member. Clarifying his stand, Ajit Pawar said, "Supriya Sule yesterday claimed that I had insulted Pawar saheb. How can I do this to a person for whom I have high respect".

More than 200 mm rainfall in several areas of Mumbai over 24 hours, NDRF teams deployed



PTI ■ MUMBAI

Several locations in Mumbai received over 200 mm of rainfall in the 24 hours leading up to 8 AM on Monday, with the intense rain in the morning briefly disrupting local train services during the rush hour between Kalyan and Thakurli stations, causing delays. Some areas received up to 34 mm of rainfall in just one hour between 6 AM and 7 AM. The civic body claimed its Automatic Weather Stations (AWS) located across the city recorded more than 200 mm of rainfall at multiple locations in the last 24 hours ending at 8 AM. Three teams of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) have been deployed in Mumbai to tackle any situation amid the forecast of a high tide and moderate to heavy rains in the city and its suburbs, officials said.

In its latest forecast for the next 24 hours starting at 8 AM on Monday, the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) has predicted "moderate to heavy rain in the city and suburbs", according to the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC). A high tide of 4.59 meters is expected at 12.59 PM, the BMC stated. Malabar and Mulund Hill recorded 34 mm of rainfall between 6 am and 7 am, followed by Bhandup with 29 mm, Wadala East with 24 mm, and Versova with 20 mm. The city recorded significant rainfall in various locations, with the highest measurement of 241 mm reported at the AWS station in Trombay, Mankhurd. Other notable rainfall figures include 224 mm at Nutan Vidyamandir in Mankhurd, 223 mm at Nadkarni Park in Wadala, and 215 mm at the 'N' Ward Office in Bhandup, according to the BMC.



www.dailypioneer.com

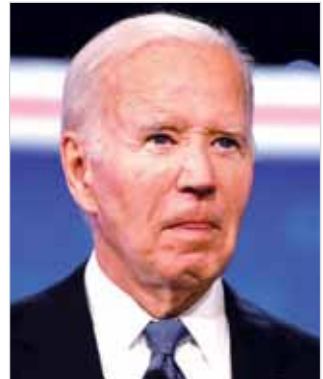
facebook.com/dailypioneer | @TheDailyPioneer | instagram.com/dailypioneer/

PAPER WITH PASSION

Biden bows out

Joe Biden opts out of the race to US presidential elections, endorses Kamala Harris to take on Trump

Amid speculations about his health, Joe Biden has finally decided to withdraw his candidature from the US Presidential elections. In his place Kamala Harris, the US Vice President is likely to be the Democrat Candidate. It would be now Kamala vs Trump who is seeking re-election after he lost to Joe Biden in the previous election. President Biden, who will be 82 years old by the time of the election, cited personal reflection and a desire to pave the way for new leadership as the primary reasons for his decision. In his address from the White House he expressed confidence in Vice President Kamala's ability to continue the administration's agenda and lead the nation forward. President Biden stated that, after much thought and consideration, he and his wife believed it was time to pass the torch to a new generation of leadership. He mentioned that Vice President Harris had been by his side through the most challenging times of his presidency and that he had seen firsthand her dedication, intelligence, and unwavering commitment to



the American people. Kamala's candidacy is historic in many ways. If elected, she would become the first female president, as well as the first Black and South Asian American to hold the office. Harris, who has served as Vice President, has been a prominent figure in the administration, particularly in areas such as criminal justice reform, immigration, and climate change. However, Harris will face significant challenges as she navigates the primary race and potential general election campaign. She will need to address concerns from both progressive and moderate factions within the Democratic Party and present a compelling vision for the future to win over undecided voters. Her

campaign is expected to highlight the achievements of the current administration, including economic recovery efforts, the handling of the COVID-19 pandemic, and initiatives aimed at promoting social justice and equality.

Joe Biden's decision is unprecedented as no presidential candidate have ever opted out so late. Two significant events might have influenced his decision. First, his lacklustre performance in the presidential debate led opponents to question his credentials to lead the country. Second, the assassination attempt on Trump has put him in the limelight and drawn widespread sympathy. These two incidents, though unrelated, may have compelled Democrats to consider other options. On the Republican side, the announcement has prompted a reassessment of strategies. With Biden out of the race, potential Republican candidates will now focus their efforts on countering Kamala's policies. Donald Trump, and Florida Governor Ron DeSantis are among those expected to vie for the Republican nomination. The coming months will reveal how Kamala positions her campaign, addresses the pressing issues facing the country, and seeks to build a broad coalition of support. Her candidacy opens a new chapter in American politics, one that could redefine the future of the Democratic Party and the nation.

PICTALK



Artists decorate a wall for the 46th Session of UNESCO's World Heritage Committee, in New Delhi

PTI

A silent revolution in mica mines of Jharkhand

The mica mines in Jharkhand's Koderma district are now free from child labour. This is a significant milestone in the region where child exploitation is rampant

On the 5th of July, the Chairperson of the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR), Priyank Kanoongo, declared that the mica mines in Jharkhand's Koderma district were free from child labour. NCPCR's announcement holds immense significance given that child labour in Koderma's mica mines has been an open secret for decades.

Despite the International Labour Organization considering mining and quarrying as hazardous work and one of the worst forms of child labour child labour continues to persist throughout the world, especially in the marginalised sector.

Children's small size makes them ideal for navigating the narrow caves and tunnels of mica extraction. In the wake of stringent environmental regulations including the 1980 Forest Conservation Act, legal mica mining paved the way for illegal trade thriving in Koderma and the rest of the mica belt looping through the dense forests of northern Jharkhand and southern Bihar. I've witnessed this journey up close. I've seen



Koderma transform from a district where every family's children were engaged in mica mining and collection to a district with all children from these mines enrolled in, and going to schools. Back in 2005, while searching for the children involved in mica mining and collection, I was in for a rude shock. The place resembled a parallel universe—schools shut down for months, CRPF battalions camping in schools, curfew-like atmosphere post 5 pm, no roads, mobile towers, electricity or tap water. I realised that the mica, which gave shimmer to our cars, cosmetics and electronic appliances, was coming from a place, which was oblivious to development and rights.

Over the last 20 years, over 32,000 children identified as working in mica mining and

collection, withdrawn from work, enrolled and retained in schools through the efforts of NGOs under the Child Labour Free Mica banner. And over 22,000 in the last two years alone. This monumental change was achieved by applying a multipronged strategy at a scale in the targeted geography:

Research: Data was gathered to assess the problem and plan their solutions. In 2019, over 20,000 children, a majority of them school dropouts, were found working in mica mines.

Participation: Children's councils were formed to allow the participation of children in decision-making on issues they were facing. This model broke the systemic barriers of oppression in access to rights and injustice. Hundreds of awareness programs were organised in mica mining villages to prevent child labour.

Protection: Based on information received from credible sources, children were rescued from mines from time to time. Additionally, in 2019, the findings of a study conducted on out-of-school children were submitted to

NCPCR. As a result, the stakeholders were able to monitor the school attendance of children to ensure that rescued children were retained in schools and no child was leaving school to work in mica mines. Partnerships: MoU with the Jharkhand state government, partnership with the NITI Aayog, local NGOs and NCPCR enabled the Child Labour Free Mica program to reach the farthest corners of the mica mining areas in Koderma.

Enhancing social security: People in mica mining-dependent villages were connected to social security schemes. Labour cards were made for daily wage labourers; and people were linked with the public distribution system and pension schemes. The above interventions, had following impact: 20,584 children withdrawn from labour and 30,364 children were enrolled in schools- Change is possible, the child labour-free mica program has proved this.

(The author is a child rights activist and founder of Just Rights for Children; views are personal)



BHUWAN RIBHU

NCPCR. As a result, the stakeholders were able to monitor the school attendance of children to ensure that rescued children were retained in schools and no child was leaving school to work in mica mines.

Partnerships: MoU with the Jharkhand state government, partnership with the NITI Aayog, local NGOs and NCPCR enabled the Child Labour Free Mica program to reach the farthest corners of the mica mining areas in Koderma.

Enhancing social security: People in mica mining-dependent villages were connected to social security schemes. Labour cards were made for daily wage labourers; and people were linked with the public distribution system and pension schemes. The above interventions, had following impact: 20,584 children withdrawn from labour and 30,364 children were enrolled in schools- Change is possible, the child labour-free mica program has proved this.

(The author is a child rights activist and founder of Just Rights for Children; views are personal)

Tackling new wave of terror in Jammu

As administrative setups suffer, urgent and coordinated action is imperative to counteract these well-orchestrated threats and restore stability



UMANG KOHLI

There has been a spate of terror attacks in the Jammu Region in the last few months. These terror attacks clearly show that the enemy has changed its tactics to strike into regions that had otherwise become peaceful. After the revocation of Article 370, China and Pakistan felt rattled about the new dynamics. China then tried to capture territory in Leh and Galwan took place. We all know Galwan was a well-planned operation by the PLA. This led to the movement of Indian Army Troops from the hinterland particularly from the Jammu region.

The void of boots on the ground in near peace regions of Jammu has led to a vacuum as far as the intelligence network is concerned. Normalcy has to be maintained for some time, also with fewer boots in the Jammu Region the human intelligence that gets developed over some time gets depleted.

Most of the army posts in Jammu and Kashmir have an administrative setup based on locals. These locals provide fresh food, logistic support and other admirative material. Even in winter cut-off posts locals provide wood, and admirative backup in both Jammu and Kashmir. Now when troops are depleted all of a sudden, the intelligence gathering in the area dries up. It also leads to a shortage of earning opportunities for the locals making them more vulnerable to the lure of money to facilitate enemy design. This vacuum of this intelligence is being exploited by the enemy and make no mistake China is fully involved in helping Pakistan in this. The attacks are well-planned and deliberate. Pakistan has started refuelling its Over Ground Workers in the Jammu region specifically.

There have been a lot of FIRs registered by the army against these OGWs over the years but little or no action has been taken on them. It's about time we took action against these FIRs. Special courts must be set up to fast-track cases filed by the army against underground workers. Many of the men move to Himachal in search of work from Doda during summers. Some of them also



make hideous for terrorists during winter for them to come there and stay during summer. Once the men move out, there are a lot of women in the Doda area who help terrorists.

These women give food and information to the terrorists. The terrorists generally hide in Guwardi (resting place Gujjars make) and hideouts made during winters in higher reaches of Doda and these women provide them food there. They also provide them with information about force movement and then help them go to the other side of the ridge. Many women work for money yet others get physically involved with these terrorists. The army is not allowed to interrogate these women or to search them. Even after the AFSPA the rules to interact with women are very strict. If the soldiers try to check the movement details of these women, false FIRs are sometimes lodged against them. It would be prudent to provide Special Women Officers in army posts who could search these women and also interro-

gate them. Also, a lot of dog squads could come in handy to chase away these women after smelling them.

Till 2003 special women police officers used to stay at far-off army posts in Doda, however as comparative normalcy returned the practice was let go. Special women units in city centres like Doda, Jammu, Udhampur etc could also help. Doda has also had a history of women moving as guides of terrorists. They provide them with local SIM cards which terrorists keep disposing of. The movement of forces from one place to another is also communicated by these OGWs. However, rape of these women by terrorists is not uncommon. One odd local terrorist generally accompanies these Pakistani terrorists to act as a physical guide. Security forces in Jammu and Kashmir work together and police and army share information and intelligence, however when two different organisations share intelligence chances of overlap and double cross increase. It will be prudent to share intel-



THE ENCOUNTERS IN JAMMU REGION IS AN EFFORT BY THE ENEMY TO SHOWCASE THAT THERE IS NO REGION IN JAMMU AND KASHMIR THAT IS PEACEFUL. THEY WANT TO ALSO SHOW THAT THE REVOCATION OF ARTICLE 370 HAS MADE NO DIFFERENCE

ligence but not mix standard operating procedures which may be different for the two organisations. Lungars of jawans of both forces must remain different at all times. Also, each piece of information and intelligence shared must be carefully corroborated by other sources independent of each other. It is also advised not to rush into situations based on half-corked information. The encounters in Jammu region is an effort by the enemy to showcase that there is no region in Jammu and Kashmir that is peaceful. They want to also show that the revocation of Article 370 has made no difference to their effort to bleed India. The entire effort of the enemy is hinged on Foreign Terrorists who are helped by local Over Ground Workers. Hoping fast action is taken against OGWs while the army eliminates these terrorists sent by Pakistan on the instructions of China. (The author has firsthand experience of encounters in Doda Forests for three long years; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

STUDENT UNREST IN BANGLADESH

Madam — The unrest in Bangladesh due to student protests is a matter of concern for India. Students from Dhaka University are outraged about the government's quota system in education. The dissatisfaction among locals from the Awami League is evident, with reports of killings in the Chittagong district. Quotas and reservations were initially tools to promote equity in society, but their continued existence raises questions about government accountability.

This issue is not unique to Bangladesh; India also has a complex reservation and quota system that makes it difficult for average students to access good education and job opportunities. Brilliant students succeed on their own merits, while others rely on quotas, leaving average students frustrated. The governments of India and Bangladesh, along with other countries that adhere to quotas and reservations, need to address this critical issue to prevent future unrest among students.

A number of Indian students are still to be evacuated. Their families are anxiously waiting any news about them as most communication channels are blocked. This situation not only highlights the immediate need for safety and support for the students by the Indian government

The international community, including neighboring countries like India, is closely monitoring the situation, recognizing the potential for wider regional implications. It is imperative that the Bangladeshi government takes swift and decisive action to address the students' concerns and restore normalcy to ensure the well-being and future of its young population.

Kirti Wadhawan | Kanpur

POLITICAL AGENDAS: A REFLECTIONS

Madam — The All-Party meeting called by the ruling dispensation seems intended to push through its agenda for this

Mumbai's monsoon mayhem



Despite the BMC's tall claims of rain readiness, waterlogging has been a persistent issue at focal points in Mumbai.

Initial rains inundate low-lying areas and block vehicular traffic, creating chaos on the roads. The widespread presence of potholes on Mumbai roads and highways exacerbates the problem, keeping road users on edge. Subways suffer from poor lighting and potholes, adding to the fears of road users. Waterlogging, traffic snarls, train delays, and fallen trees worsen the situation. The lethargy of BMC workers is evident, and public miseries go unaddressed. It is so unfortunate that the authorities take people for granted and despite enormous resources at their disposal do not act in time. It is now up to the people to take precautions during the rains and help others to avoid mishaps. Helping each other during floods is a practical solution to the pressing problems faced by the people of Mumbai.

C K Subramaniam | Mumbai

session of Parliament without opposition hurdles. Every party, state, and individual leader has a wish list. The former Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, who previously demanded Special Category Status for the state before assuming office, was expected to achieve this goal with an absolute majority. However, to everyone's surprise, he never addressed this issue and focused instead on implementing Union government programs. Now, having lost power, he has again raised the issue of Special Category Status for Andhra Pradesh. People have come to understand the leaders and their parties; it is now up to the leaders to understand the people and their demands.

A G Rajmohan | Anantapur

CELEBRATING INDIAN TENNIS LEGENDS

Madam — It was a significant day at Newport, Rhode Island, as Indian tennis legends Leander Adrian Paes and Vijay Amritraj were inducted into the prestigious International Hall of Fame. Leander Paes, a Padma Bhushan and

Padma Shri awardee, is renowned as one of the all-time great doubles players, holding the record for the most doubles wins in Davis Cup. His illustrious career includes eight men's doubles and ten mixed doubles Grand Slam titles. In 1999, he, along with Mahesh Bhupathi, became the first pair in the Open era to reach the finals of all four Grand Slams in men's doubles in the same calendar year.

Vijay Amritraj, a Padma Shri awardee, was inducted in the contributor category, recognizing his visionary leadership and transcendent impact on the sport. In 2022, Amritraj was honored in London by the International Tennis Hall of Fame and the International Tennis Federation for his lifetime contributions to tennis. Their achievements continue to inspire and shape the future of tennis. Kudos to both Paes and Amritraj for making India proud.

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN THE POWER OF FORGIVENESS

It can liberate the mind from perpetual conflict and lead to inner peace



RAVI VALLURI

Recall the iconic lines, of Amitabh Bachchan in the movie Deewar — looks intently at the idol of Lord Shiva and says, “Bahut khush hoge tum!” Bachchan, in the movie, essayed the role of an atheist smuggler. However, eventually, in the final stages of his life, he surrenders to the Supreme Power and seeks forgiveness. True enlightenment is the art of living compassionately. The human mind and heart reach a point of inflexion where an act of pardon remains an inescapable reality.

A prosaic individual might not be able to separate the chaff from the grain. His mind is full of antipathetic thoughts that he cannot transcend the barrier and is unable to exonerate anyone who has inflicted pain or hardship on him. The mind, full of gloom-ridden and obstructive thoughts cannot perceive the divinity in others. It remains perpetually in a state of conflict. Such an emotionally distraught person would castigate even angelic and divine figures out of callowness. Several organised and structured religions lay prominence on the art of forgiveness. If an individual does not rise to the sublime spheres of compassion and forgiveness, then he gets trapped in the whirlpool of cause and effect. The unabated Karmic cycle continues without any resolution.

The pivot is to fortify and protect the human mind to make it robust and compassionate. It attempts to extricate the self from the cause and effect of actions and even non-actions. Action and non-actions of humans indeed leave an indelible impression on the human mind. It would be perspicacious to pose as to how non-actions are also a kind of Karmic activity and in what manner it impacts the human mind and consciousness. Non-action in a way represents not taking up the gauntlet. Sage Ashtavakra, who authored the treatise, Ashtavakra Gita, posits a theory that an individual should break the bondage of guilt and anger to invoke the grace of remission. There is a poignant Zen story that explains the exemplary tenets of compassion and forgiveness. Aeon ago a Zen Master summoned his tutees in a Temple of Knowledge and asked them if they harboured the antipathetic emotion of hatred in their minds. “Yes!” exclaimed the disciples. The Master directed his disciples to place a potato each



in their bag and always travel with it as a reminder that despite the practice of meditation and breathing exercises their prana level was not high enough to expatriate hatred and inculcate compassion. The number of potatoes was to increase depending on the quantum of anger and would be directly proportional to the antipathy in their minds. Some young monks ended up carrying a bagful of potatoes, which over a period became malodorous. In sheer exasperation, the harried disciples sought refuge in the grace of the master to dispense away with the bag. The Zen Master guffawed and chided his students to abandon the negative trait of abhorrence from their minds, lest the malodour of these traits become a burden all through their lives. To lead a warm and healthy life, individuals should embark upon the path of forgiveness and compassion. This suffuses the mind with immense strength and courage of conviction. It would be insightful for any individual to make positive affirmations, reinforcing love for every animate and inanimate object to build a divine society. Such affirmations would train the mind to remain unruffled and spread the quintessential gospel of forgiveness. Thereby humans would truly embrace fellow beings. If we construe the human mind to be the hardware, compassionate thoughts and forgiveness are part of non-negotiable software.

(The writer is the CEO of Chhattisgarh East Railway Ltd. and Chhattisgarh East West Railway Ltd. He is a faculty of the Art of Living; views expressed are personal)

A blueprint for boosting rural economic growth

India's rural sector stands at a pivotal juncture, poised for transformation through small-scale and green enterprises. It has potential to become India's growth engine



MONICA B SOOD



India's rural sector must be transformed for inclusive growth and sustainable development. This change relies on small-scale and green enterprises to boost the rural economy, empower women, and employ unskilled workers. By channelling resources such as the extra Rs 1 lakh crore RBI dividends into capital projects and innovative schemes, India can foster self-sustainability in rural areas, mitigate youth distress, and rejuvenate the demand side of the economy.

This comprehensive approach not only addresses immediate employment needs but also lays the foundation for long-term capital formation and environmental preservation.

Incorporation of small-scale and green industries as the engine of growth

Micro enterprises have always been the backbone of the Indian agriculture-based economy. These labour-intensive enterprises perfectly capture the unskilled and semi-skilled manpower from the farming communities, therefore, creating employment and improving existence standards without much training. The development of these industries generates a massive multiplier effect on the creation of other business lines that support them and the general economy. Green industries are therefore leading this change. Encompassing renewable energy, organic farming, and sustainable manufacturing, these sectors offer dual benefits: employment opportunities for production and environmental management.

The establishment of green industries in the rural region targets to solve social problems like climate change and environmental degradation and at the same time create a sustainable means of living. This was done by allowing biogas and biofuel plants, solar energy farms, Ayurvedic and Unani medicine industries, and cooperative organic farming. These measures create employment, lessen the dependency on fossil energy and foster the preservation of the environment.

Women empowerment Out of the total rural population of India, the female population is about 30% which is a great unexplored talent pool. It is shown the pro-



THE ESTABLISHMENT OF GREEN INDUSTRIES IN THE RURAL REGION TARGETS TO SOLVE SOCIAL PROBLEMS LIKE CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION AND AT THE SAME TIME CREATE A SUSTAINABLE MEANS OF LIVING

motion of employment and entrepreneurship in these women brings substantial socio-economic returns. Micro and sustainable industries remain essential in empowering women since they create employment, skills development, and business opportunities for women. Self-help groups, women-based cooperatives and micro enterprises are the best way to ensure women's productive participation in the rural economy. These initiatives exist in areas where women dominate including handcrafting, production in textiles, manufacturing of alternative/Ayurvedic products, processing of raw materials, farming organically, milk production, and food processing. Credit, training, and market linkages also enable women to set up and expand their businesses besides improving on household incomes and community development.

Public private partnerships A Channel for Facilitating PPP for Rural Development PPP is a powerful platform for pooling resources and skills to promote rural development. Thus, PPP models can initiate the development of small and green industries in rural areas with the support of the government and private investors. The government can provide policy support and an environment for development and financial backing while the private players bring in funds, technical expertise, and managerial skills. As per this model, to encourage rural development, a part of ?1 lakh crore RBI dividends can be spent to co-finance with private entities. It can be used to fund the development of industrial clusters, renewable energy projects, and training institutions with efficient implementation and compliance with social and environmental responsibility.

Capital formation and rural employment

These are two basic objectives of

the growth process that need to be understood and analysed. To sum up, the provision of ?1 lakh crore RBI dividends for capital investments in the form of sustainable rural development plans provides a strong base. Construction of infrastructure such as roads, bridges, renewable energy facilities, and development of industrial estates can offer employment in the short run as well as in the long run spur economic development. A targeted investment can engage millions annually, thus erasing rural unemployment and distress to a large extent. In this way, employment of non-skilled and semi-skilled people from rural areas is possible, and thus future generations are protected from unemployment migration to urban areas, and rural-urban disparity. The placement of rural youth through placement in local schools, hospitals, and government offices helps in the tackling of manpower issues leading to improved service delivery and welfare of the populace.

Funding rural transformation

Funding the strategic rural development agenda calls for out-of-the-box funding acquisition strategies to tap several sources of funds. To the Rs 1 lakh crore RBI dividends, contributions from CSR, and own finances of panchayats and municipalities, and specific cess on fuel, income tax, and GST can be added. For example, the mandatory 25% contribution from CSR funds can be used to direct corporate money into rural development causes. While a 0.5% cess on luxury items, cars, aeroplane fares and GST can fetch a huge additional amount. However, it revealed that additional resources can be mobilized from the Skill Development Schemes (SKS) and hospital's SKS funds for support of wages in essential sectors. The introduction of a small cess on share trading can also produce a fairly good revenue for such

a scheme in turn funding the rural employment programme permanently.

Addressing rural unemployment

At the moment, unemployment has touched the figure of 8% in India. 1 per cent of the nation's unemployed populace is comprised of rural youth. If PM wants to bring the unemployment rate down to 6% and this is considered nearly equal to the employment rate observed in the developed countries, the scheme should ensure employment generation for at least 1 crore rural youth. The scheme should aim at offering low-wage employment to the increase in unemployment among the rural youthful population while at the same time ensuring that such employment offers incentives to make the youth stay in their given community without competing for skilled employment opportunities. This way the scheme means setting wages at ?10,000 per month with 80:20 work distribution will sustain rural households' income and at the same time does not hinder organised labour employers markets.

A Roadmap to rural rejuvenation

Additional Rs1 lakh crore of RBI dividends coupled with idea capitalisms as sources of funding open the doors of a scheme that has the potential of providing a road map for rural rejuvenation. As a result, the small-scale industries, green industries, women and unskilled rural labour can make the scheme self-sustainable, reduce unemployment and bring a long-lasting impact on the environment. PPP and the focus on capital development will help the scheme to be sustainable and grow in scale, thus painting a better picture for rural India.

(The writer is Chairperson of the National Unity & Security Council; views are personal)

Bihar again misses out on Olympic representation

Bihar's chronic issues in sports infrastructure, funding mismanagement, and administrative neglect continue to hinder its representation on the global stage

Bihar is bereft of a berth in the Olympics again.

By Gyan Bhadra The last week of this month is going to witness the glistening inaugural ceremony of the Olympic games of 17-days duration in Paris. In its wake sports pundits in India are preempting and counting on their fingers the medal tally Indian athletes will bag for the country. However, at the time of writing this piece, the Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs had put its imprimatur on the list of 117 athletes along with 140 supporting Staff. Now the question crops up: Is there any athlete from Bihar representing India in the Paris Olympics? The answer is a resounding “no”. As in the Tokyo Olympics; so in the



GYAN BHADRA

Paris Olympics, there is no representation of Bihar's sportsmen. The reasons behind it are threefold. One, as far as sports infrastructure in Bihar is concerned, there is a lack of an adequate number of stadiums, sports-related training centres and the ablest guidance of coaches. The reasons could be attributed to the fact that government investment in the sports sector is abysmally low. Even central financial

assistance given to the Bihar government to the tune of 50.83 crores as part of the “Kheho India” scheme was seemingly not utilised for either the development of infrastructure or the honing of skills of athletes in the state.

The patterns of allocation of funds to the sports sector are depressingly alarming. It has been observed that money meant for the overall growth of the sports sector is diverted as per the whims and fancies of politicians.

This invariably puts a toll on the sports industry which finds itself in a quandary and struggling always. Two, it goes without saying that the association of politicians with prominent sports bodies is an age-old pastime.



Every politician worth its salt desires to be a member of sports bodies. Whether it be BCCI or sports bodies at the state level, every political leader wants to usurp the cake of huge funds invested in the sports bodies then how could Bihar be left behind? Instead of being deeds heroes, espousing the

cause of sports development in Bihar, politicians, once getting a coveted position in sports bodies, exploit available resources to serve their ends.

Public memory is short. But not so painfully short that it will forget the fact that former Chief Minister Lalu Yadav, when, at the helms of Bihar Cricket Association as President, did not do enough in the realm of training budding talents of Bihar. The lack of Lalu's political will to promote cricket could be gauged by the fact that during his tenure as BCA president, no cricket player from Bihar had got a berth even in the Ranji Trophy squad; what to talk of big league matches at an international level. Now

sports pundits may arguably put a contention that during Lalu's tenure as BCA president, Bihar did not have a State Ranji Team as partition of Bihar caused losses to Bihar concerning sports facilities. Jharkhand carried takeaways of a major chunk of sports facilities with itself. However, taking refuge in this excuse by sports pundits held no water for scores of young cricket players then. This is more so because, during that period, RJD was led by Rabri Devi at the helm of state affairs; and Lalu could have done a lot about setting up a proper state Ranji Team and appointing the ablest coaches to train state's cricket players. Three, the role of the Bihar

Olympic Association (BOA) in preparing athletes for the Olympic games leaves much to be desired. Going by records, BOA officials do not take the trouble to organise events and trials for grooming athletes to the level of world-level Olympic games. So it springs no surprise that no athlete from Bihar had figured in the list of 117 athlete-member teams for the Paris Olympics. What is worse, there is a blame game between BOA and the state government over this sorry state of sports affairs. BOA puts the onus on the state government for sheer negligence about the lack of infrastructure and trained coaches. This results in BOA finding itself unable to organise

events at regular intervals. On the other hand, the state government absolves itself of essential responsibilities about BOA by saying that BOA is an independent entity and the government cannot interfere with its functioning. In this ongoing war of attrition, budding talented athletes are the losers. Eventually, it could be summed up that the scheme “Medal Lao, Naukri Pao” may seem to be alluring to a large number of youth at first glance. However, due to the lack of necessary sports wherewithals in Bihar, the scheme would not cut much ice with scores of young talents.

(The author is a columnist, views are personal)

World leaders thank Biden for his 'global leadership'

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

World leaders on Monday thanked him for his bold steps and global leadership during challenging times. Biden on Sunday announced that he is exiting the 2024 presidential race and backed his deputy Kamala Harris to be the Democratic Party's presidential candidate in the November 5 election. In a post on X, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said he respects President Biden's decision and looks forward to working together for the remainder of his term.

"I know that, as he has done throughout his remarkable career, he will have made his decision based on what he believes is best for the American people," said Starmer, who met with Biden this month in Washington. Former UK prime minister Rishi Sunak said in a post on X that he saw Biden's "love for America and dedication to service" firsthand while working with him. He also outlined some achievements between



Patricia Greene, of Washington, is photographed holding a sign thanking President Joe Biden near the White House in Washington, Sunday, July 21, 2024. Biden dropped out of the 2024 race for the White House on Sunday, ending his bid for reelection following a disastrous debate with Donald Trump that raised doubts about his fitness for office just four months before the election. AP/PTI

the US and the UK. Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese in a post on

X thanked Biden for his "leadership and ongoing service." "The Australia-US Alliance

has never been stronger with our shared commitment to democratic values, international security, economic prosperity and climate action for this and future generations," he said.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau thanked Biden for being a "partner to Canadians - and a true friend". "I've known President Biden for years. He's a great man, and everything he does is guided by his love for his country. As President, he is a partner to Canadians — and a true friend. To President Biden and the First Lady: thank you," Trudeau posted on X along with a photograph of him with Biden.

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said, "I refrain from commenting directly on this issue because it involves domestic politics in the US but I recognise that President Biden's decision is based on his desire to make the best possible political decision."

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said his country is grateful to President

Biden for his "unwavering support" for its fight for freedom, which, along with strong bipartisan support in the United States, has been and continues to be critical.

"Many strong decisions have been made in recent years and they will be remembered as bold steps taken by President Biden in response to challenging times. And we respect today's tough but strong decision," he said on X.

Zelensky said Ukraine will always be thankful for Biden's leadership. "He supported our country during the most dramatic moment in history, assisted us in preventing Putin from occupying our country, and has continued to support us throughout this terrible war," he said. Taking to X, Israeli President Isaac Herzog described Biden as a "true ally of the Jewish people" and thanked him for his friendship and steadfast support for the Israeli people over his decades-long career.

"As the first US President to visit Israel in wartime, as a

recipient of the Israeli Presidential Medal of Honor, and as a true ally of the Jewish people, he is a symbol of the unbreakable bond between our two peoples. I send him, @FLOTUS Jill Biden, and all his family, my warmest wishes from Jerusalem," Herzog wrote. Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant in a post on X said the US president's "steadfast backing, especially during the war, has been invaluable". The Biden administration has been one of the biggest supporters of Israel's war in Gaza since Hamas' October 7 attacks last year. But he has increasingly clashed with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu over humanitarian aid and the mounting civilian death toll of the conflict.

Netanyahu, who is expected to visit Washington this week, has not yet given any statement on Biden's decision to withdraw from the presidential race. Irish Prime Minister Simon Harris called Biden "a proud American with an Irish soul," and thanked him for his "glob-

al leadership" and "friendship". In a post on X, Ireland Foreign Minister Micheal Martin said he heard the news "with both sadness & admiration", describing Biden as an "abiding friend of Ireland". Martin said Biden provided "invaluable support for peace & prosperity on this island" and wished him the best.

New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon said in a post on X that "Biden has dedicated his life to public service, and that is something that deserves much respect." He thanked Biden for his "commitment to New Zealand" and said he looks "forward to working with him for the remainder of his presidency".

Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk wrote on X that Biden had made difficult decisions "thanks to which Poland, America and the world are safer, and democracy stronger." "I know you were driven by the same motivations when announcing your final decision. Probably the most difficult one," Tusk said.

Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro at a rally on Sunday said Biden made the "correct" decision and put his family and health first. He wished him "health and a long life." South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol's office said it does not wish to comment on domestic political situations in other countries, but added that the South Korean government "will continue to work closely with the US to further develop the South Korea-US global comprehensive strategic alliance". Biden's decision to nominate Harris, who is of both Indian and African origin, follows weeks of intense pressure from fellow Democrats after his disastrous presidential debate performance against his Republican rival and former US president Donald Trump last month.

"Today I want to offer my full support and endorsement for Kamala to be the nominee of our party this year. Democrats - it's time to come together and beat Trump. Let's do this," Biden said in a post on X.

Parts of Gaza humanitarian zone to be evacuated

AP ■ DEIR AL-BALAH

The Israeli military ordered the evacuation Monday of part of a crowded area in the Gaza Strip it had designated a humanitarian zone, saying it is planning an operation against Hamas militants there.

Thousands of Palestinians, many carrying backpacks and accompanied by children, walked down dusty roads under the scorching sun, navigating dilapidated cars with belongings tied on top. Many Palestinians have been uprooted multiple times in search of safety during Israeli's air and ground campaign. "We do not know where we are walking," said Kholoud Al Dadas, as she clutched her children. "This is our seventh or eighth time we have been displaced. While we were sleeping in our homes, they started shooting at us, bombing from everywhere." Moments later, she collapsed in exhaustion.

The Israeli military said it is planning to begin an operation against Hamas militants who have embedded themselves in the area and used it to launch rockets toward Israel. The area



Israeli Police and ZAKA emergency service work at the scene of an attempted stabbing attack at the entrance to Netiv HaAsara, near the Gaza border in southern Israel on Monday. AP/PTI

includes the eastern part of the Muwasi humanitarian zone in the southern Gaza Strip. Earlier this month, Israel estimated at least 1.8 million Palestinians are now in the humanitarian zone it declared, covering about 14 kilometres (8.6 miles) along the Mediterranean. That's the bulk of Gaza's 2.3 million popula-

tion. Much of the area is blanketed with tent camps that lack sanitation and medical facilities and have limited access to aid, UN and humanitarian groups say. Families live amid mountains of trash and streams contaminated by sewage. Gaza's Health Ministry said the toll from Israel's nine-

month war against Hamas in Gaza has surpassed 39,000 Palestinians killed and 89,800 wounded. The ministry's count does not distinguish between combatants and civilians. The war began with an assault by Hamas militants on southern Israel on October 7 that killed 1,200 people, most of them civilians, and took about 250 hostages. About 120 remain held, about a third of them believed to be dead, according to Israeli authorities. Delicate negotiations continued for a cease-fire and hostage release, with US and Israeli officials expressing hope that an agreement was closer than ever. A negotiating team will be sent to continue talks on Thursday, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said. Egypt, Qatar and the United States are pushing Israel and Hamas toward a phased cease-fire deal that would stop the fighting and free the hostages.

Netanyahu left Monday on a much-anticipated trip to the United States to meet with President Joe Biden, who on Sunday said he would not seek another term, and address

Congress. Netanyahu said that regardless of who becomes the next US president, "our enemies must know that Israel and the United States stand together tomorrow and always." He said he will thank Biden for more than 40 years of friendship, while pushing him for more support on certain issues. The Israeli military said it was continuing to operate in central and southern Gaza. At least 38 people were killed in the southern city of Khan Younis, according to hospital officials and a count of the bodies by an Associated Press journalist. One person was killed and three injured in a strike outside Al-Aqsa Hospital in the central town of Deir-Al-Balah, where many people have sheltered outside the facility.

The Israeli military announced the deaths of two additional Israeli hostages, saying they believe Yagev Buchshtab, 35, and Alex Dancyg, 76, kidnapped on Oct. 7, were no longer alive, based on intelligence. Both were seen alive in Gaza by other hostages who had been released. Dancyg, a Holocaust educator, gave history lectures to hostages to pass

the time, according to the Hostage and Missing Families Forum.

Netanyahu has vowed to wipe out Hamas' military and governing capabilities and secure the return of the remaining hostages. Families of hostages and thousands of other Israelis have held weekly demonstrations to urge the prime minister to reach a cease-fire deal that would bring their loved ones home.

Also Monday, Israeli police said a Canadian citizen was killed after threatening Israeli security forces with a knife near the Gaza border. The Israeli military said the man drove to the entrance of an Israeli town close to the border, left his vehicle and approached security forces with a knife. The forces opened fire and killed the man. There were no other injuries. The attack took place at the entrance to the Israeli town of Netiv HaAsara, 300 metres (yards) north of the border. On Oct. 7, Netiv HaAsara was attacked and 20 residents were killed after gunmen passed over the concrete border wall using paragliders, according to Israeli military officials.

Israel's Netanyahu treads carefully in Washington post-Joe Biden exit

AP ■ JERUSALEM



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu left for Washington on Monday, leaving behind a brutal war to make a politically precarious speech before the US Congress at a time of great uncertainty following Joe Biden's withdrawal from the presidential race. With efforts ongoing to bring about a cease-fire between Israel and Hamas, rising concerns about the war spreading to Lebanon and Yemen, and the US in the midst of a dizzying election campaign, Netanyahu's speech has the potential to cause disarray on both sides of the ocean.

The risks only increased with Biden's decision Sunday to drop out of the race for president, especially since the choice of a replacement Democratic nominee — and the potential next American leader — are still up in the air.

Before stepping on the plane, Netanyahu said he would emphasise the theme of Israel's bipartisan support in his speech and said Israel would remain America's key ally in the Middle East "regardless who the American people choose as their next president".

"In this time of war and uncertainty, it's important that Israel's enemies know that America and Israel stand together," he said, adding that he will meet Biden during his trip and thank him for his support for Israel.

A person familiar with Biden's schedule confirmed Sunday that the president will host Netanyahu at the White House. The official, speaking on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to comment publicly, said the exact timing of the meeting has not been established because Biden is recovering from COVID-19.

Netanyahu is scheduled to address Congress on Wednesday. He is also expected to meet with Vice President Kamala Harris, who is seeking the Democratic Party's presidential nomination.

Netanyahu will deliver his congressional address with an eye on several audiences: his ultra-nationalist governing partners, the key to his political survival; the Biden administration, which Netanyahu counts on for diplo-

matic and military support; and Donald Trump's Republican Party, which could offer Netanyahu a reset in relations if he is reelected in November. His words risk angering any one of those constituencies, which the Israeli leader cannot afford if he hopes to hold on to his tenuous grip on power.

"There are a few land mines and pitfalls on this trip," Eytan Gilboa, an expert on US-Israel relations at Israel's Bar-Ilan University, said before Biden's withdrawal. "He is thought of as a political wizard who knows how to escape from traps. I am not sure he still knows how to do that."

It is Netanyahu's fourth speech to Congress — more than any other world leader. During his address, his far-right governing partners will want to hear his resolve to continue the war and topple Hamas.

The Biden administration will look for progress toward the latest US-backed cease-fire proposal and details on a postwar vision. Republicans hope Netanyahu besmirches Biden and bolsters the GOP's hopes for perception as Israel's stalwart supporter.

The war, which was sparked by Hamas' Oct 7 attack on southern Israel, has tested Israel's ties with its top ally as never before. The Biden administration has stood staunchly beside Israel. But it has grown increasingly alarmed about the conduct of the Israeli military, the continued difficulties of getting humanitarian aid into Gaza, especially after the short-lived US military pier off Gaza coast, as well as Israel's lack of postwar plans and the harm to civilians in Gaza.

US-Russian journalist convicted in secret trial

Washington (AP): A Russian court has convicted Alsu Kurmasheva, a Russian-American journalist for the US government-funded Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, of spreading false information about the Russian army and sentenced her to 6½ years in prison after a secret trial, court records and officials said on Monday. The conviction in the city of Kazan came on Friday, the same day that a court in the Russian city of Yekaterinburg convicted Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich of espionage and sentenced him to 16 years in prison in a case that the US called politically motivated. Kurmasheva, an editor for RFE/RL, was convicted of "spreading false information" about the military, according to the website of the SC of Tatarstan.

My aim is to defeat Trump: Kamala

PTI ■ WASHINGTON



Kamala Harris has said she plans to "earn and win" the Democratic presidential nomination to defeat Donald Trump after President Joe Biden decided not to seek re-election, putting her on the path to become the first Black woman and first Asian American to lead a major political party's ticket.

Vice President Harris, 59, said she was "honoured" to receive Biden's endorsement and voiced her appreciation for his extraordinary leadership as President of the United States and his decades of service to the country.

"I am honoured to have the President's endorsement and my intention is to earn and win this nomination," she said in a statement on Sunday.

The historic endorsement came after Biden, 81, announced Sunday that he is dropping out of the race following weeks of disarray within the Democratic Party. Biden's disastrous first

presidential debate with his Republican rival and former president Donald Trump called into question his ability to win a second term and govern for another four years.

Despite Biden's backing, it remains unclear whether Harris will become the nominee, or what process the Democratic Party would take to select an alternative.

Democratic National Committee chairman Jaime Harrison said in a statement that in the coming days, the party will "undertake a trans-

parent and orderly process to move forward as a united Democratic Party with a candidate who can defeat Donald Trump in November." Though Biden's endorsement almost seals her position as the presidential nominee of her party, Harris still needs to get elected by the party's delegates during the Democratic National Convention in Chicago from August 19-22. Biden has won 3,896 delegates as against 1,976 required to win the party's presidential nomination. In a move that would give her access to the campaign funds, the Biden-Harris campaign amended filings with the Federal Election Commission to rename its principal committee and declare Harris a candidate for president.

Following Biden's decision, Harris, who has been serving as the US' first female, first Black and first South Asian vice president since 2021, immediately secured the endorsement of former president Bill Clinton, thus making it a bit easier for her to

win the delegate battle during the party convention.

"On behalf of the American people, I thank Joe Biden for his extraordinary leadership as President of the United States and for his decades of service to our country," she said.

Harris said over the past year, she has travelled across the country, talking to Americans about the clear choice in this momentous election. "And that is what I will continue to do in the days and weeks ahead. I will do everything in my power to unite the Democratic Party — and unite our nation — to defeat Donald Trump and his extreme Project 2025 agenda... We have 107 days until Election Day. Together, we will fight. And together, we will win," she said. Meanwhile, the "overwhelming majority" of state Democratic Party chairs have announced their support for Vice President Harris as their nominee for president, the Association of State Democratic Committees (ASDC) said in a statement.

Assailant kills 6, wounds 6 at care home in Croatia

Zagreb (AP): An armed assailant entered a care home for older people in central Croatia Monday and opened fire, killing six people and wounding six others, police said. Croatia's police chief, Nikola Milina, said five people died immediately, while one more person died in a hospital.

The suspect fled the scene, but the police soon caught him in a cafe near the facility in the town of Daruvar, he said.

The victims were five residents of the care home and one employee, Milina said. Police said they were informed of the attack on Monday morning.

The suspect is "under police supervision," said a statement by the regional police office.

Top Chinese university fires professor after complaint of sexual harassment

Hong Kong (AP): A top Chinese university fired a professor on Monday, a day after a graduate student accused him of sexual harassment on social media in a rare public allegation and posted recordings as evidence, drawing widespread support.

The woman, who identified herself as Wang Di, said she is studying in a doctoral program at Renmin University of China's School of Liberal Arts. She posted a 59-minute video on Sunday on the Weibo social media platform in which she said her supervisor, an ex-vice dean and former Communist Party representative at the school in Beijing, physically and verbally abused her. She also said that for more than two years after she rejected him, he assigned her many tasks, scold-

ed her and threatened that she would not graduate. She also posted audio clips which she said were evidence of the harassment. In one, a man could be heard trying to kiss a woman, who kept saying, "No, no, teacher." "At this moment, I can no longer endure it and have nowhere to retreat, so I am speaking out," she wrote. She demanded that the professor be punished and a new supervisor be appointed for her. She wore a mask in the video, but held up an identification card. Her post drew 2.2 million likes as of Monday evening, with many users leaving comments in support of the student. Renmin University said Monday it concluded that the complaints against the professor were true following an investigation. In addition to

sacking him, it also revoked his party membership and reported the incident to authorities in accordance with the law, it said in a statement on Weibo. It said the academic had "seriously betrayed the original mission of teaching and educating" and that his acts violated party discipline and school rules. The professor did not immediately respond to a request for comment. After the university announced its decision, the woman's post on Weibo disappeared.

The Associated Press does not generally name people who say they are victims of sexual harassment unless they publicly identify themselves.

In China, public accusations of sexual harassment have become rare in recent years following an uptick during a brief

#MeToo movement that was swiftly snuffed out by the government. The ruling Communist Party views powerful social movements as a potential threat to stability and its hold on power.

In June, a Chinese journalist who promoted women's rights as part of the #MeToo movement was sentenced to five years in prison on charges of incitement to subvert state authority, according to her supporters.

In one of the most high-profile cases, former Chinese tennis star Peng Shuai disappeared from public view after accusing former high-level official Zhang Gaoli of sexual assault in 2021. Her accusation was quickly scrubbed from the internet and discussion of it remains heavily censored.

UK to fast-track returns of illegal migrants to safe countries like India

PTI ■ LONDON

The asylum applications of migrants entering the UK illegally from countries on its designated safe states list, including India, will be fast-tracked to deport them back speedily under new Labour government proposals.

UK Home Secretary Yvette Cooper has said she has begun the work to move staff from the previous Conservative-led government's now-abolished Rwanda scheme to a new Returns and Enforcement programme. In place of the policy of trying to fly out illegal migrants to the African country, the Home Office plans to increase the returns to the countries of origin, starting with an increase in raids on businesses employing illegal workers. "We are drawing up new plans for fast-track decisions and returns for safe countries," Cooper wrote in 'The Sun on Sunday'. "Most people in this country want to see a properly controlled and managed asylum

system, where Britain does its bit to help those fleeing conflict and persecution, but where those who have no right to be in the country are swiftly removed," she said. India was added to the UK's "Safe States" list last November, which would speed up the process of returning Indians who travel from the country illegally, as Home Office figures show asylum seekers from India have a very low acceptance rate.

The number of Indians crossing the English Channel illegally via small boats into the UK surged briefly between September 2022 and March 2023 before falling to a "negligible proportion", according to the Migration Observatory at the University of Oxford. Vietnam and Albania are among the other countries on the safe list which will be targeted for speedier returns.

"I was shocked to discover the Conservatives had 1,000 civil servants working on the Rwanda Partnership. Not any more. We've moved staff instead into

a new Returns and Enforcement programme to increase returns of those with no right to be here and to make sure rules are respected and enforced, starting with an increase in illegal working raids," said Cooper. "We've directed Immigration Enforcement to intensify their operations over the summer, with a focus on employers who are fuelling the trade of criminal gangs by exploiting and facilitating illegal working here in the UK — including in car washes and in the beauty sector," she said. It comes as the newly appointed minister announced the creation of a new Border Security Command in the days after Labour won a landslide victory in the July 4 general election.

Under the plans, a core team in the Home Office is establishing the remit, governance and strategic direction of the new command. Early legislation is being prepared to introduce new counter-terror style powers and stronger measures to tackle organised immigration crime.

Under the plans, a core team in the Home Office is establishing the remit, governance and strategic direction of the new command. Early legislation is being prepared to introduce new counter-terror style powers and stronger measures to tackle organised immigration crime.

Internet down in B'desh despite calm

AP ■ DHAKA

Bangladesh remained without internet for a fifth day...

This comes after a curfew with a shoot-on-sight order...



Bangladeshi military forces soldiers put up barbed wires on a main street in Dhaka, Bangladesh, Monday, July 22

ment to restore internet services. Hasnat Abdullah, a coordinator...

dents can return to their campuses safely. Abdullah also said they wanted the government to end the curfew...

our movement like a coward," he added. Another key organiser of the student protests...

that guns, tear gas and other weapons have been used in the vicinity of the embassy.

The protests have posed the most serious challenge to Bangladesh's government since Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina won a fourth consecutive term...

The main opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party has backed the protests, vowing to organize its own demonstrations...

Pak Army says political mafia spreading canard about counter-terror operation

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

The Pakistan Army on Monday said that an "organised political mafia" was spreading misinformation about a planned new counter-terrorism operation...

such example of this." He also clarified that it was only for the purpose of "reinvigorating the already in-place National Action Plan (NAP)"...

"digital terrorism" is active against the army and its leadership on social media, adding that militants involved in attacks on law enforcement agencies...

SL Tamil parties sans ITAK to field common candidate for prez election

Colombo (PTI): A group of Tamil parties sans the main party, ITAK, on Monday signed an agreement to field a common candidate for the presidential election...

UAE sentences Bangladeshi nationals to prison over home govt protests

AP ■ DUBAI

A court in the United Arab Emirates sentenced dozens of Bangladeshi nationals to prison, including three for life imprisonment...

scale marches in several streets of the UAE in protest against decisions made by the Bangladesh government...

charges, including "gathering in a public place and protesting against their home government with the intent to incite unrest..."

School blown up in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Peshawar (PTI): Unidentified militants blew up a government girl's school in a tribal district in Pakistan's restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province...

Police arrest PTI information secretary during raid

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan police on Monday arrested jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's information secretary...

persons a few weeks ago that left bruises on his face. The party also condemned the move through its official X account...

ers & important documents," he wrote on X. Earlier, SSP Hassan Jahangir Watoo led the raid at the police encircled the PTI headquarters...

Rescue op underway after flooding, bridge collapse kill 25

AP ■ BEIJING Rescuers on Monday were searching for dozens missing after heavy rains caused flash flooding and a bridge collapse in different parts of China, killing at least 25 people...

Philippine prez orders shutdown of Chinese-run online gambling outfits

AP ■ LA MANILA President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Monday ordered an immediate ban on widespread and mostly Chinese-run online gaming operations in the Philippines...

Chinese-run online gambling outfits — estimated to number more than 400 across the Philippines and employing tens of thousands of Chinese and Southeast Asian nationals...

able to run for a public office reserved only for Filipinos. The mayor, Alice Guo, has denied any wrongdoing but has been suspended from her post...

In Kyiv, music fans rub shoulders with generals, artists

AP ■ KYIV

This year, Ukraine's largest music festival struck a different chord. Gone were the international headliners, the massive performance halls and the hundreds of thousands of visitors...

commanders and famous singers who crooned songs imbued with national pride. Music was the main draw, yes, but so was shattering the illusion that the capital is invulnerable...

should understand that they cannot live in a bubble," he said. And yet, a bubble is precisely how it feels to be in Kyiv...

gy generation at the height of a summer heat wave. At every corner of the music festival - the first time it was held since Russia's full-scale invasion...

to improve target practice by gunning down shadowy virtual infantrymen. At another corner, medics brandished severed plastic limbs and offered emergency medical training.

On stage, Zhadan starts with one of his most beloved songs "Malvi" or "Mallow". The crowd sings along with him, word for word...

Hundreds of migrants leave southern Mexico on foot for US border

AP ■ CIUDAD HIDALGO

Hundreds of migrants from around a dozen countries left from Mexico's southern border on foot Sunday, as they attempt to make it to the US border...

towns further to the north. Migrants trying to pass through Mexico in recent years have organised large groups to try to reduce the risk of being attacked by gangs...

Advertisement for Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar tender notice. Includes table with columns for Sr. No., Item, and Quantity.

Economic Survey slams energy guzzling developed world

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

On the one hand, developing nations are being forcefully nudged to sign up for climate commitments that they are not ready for, on the other hand, the developed world is in a mad 'Scramble for Africa' kind of rush to usher in the latest and the most expansive energy guzzlers like Artificial Intelligence ecosystem, the Government's 'Economic Survey 2023-24 has said.



productivity, paradoxically contributes to higher emissions. "Despite ambitious pledges by leading technology firms to achieve Net Zero emissions by 2030, their pursuit of AI dominance has resulted in a 30 per cent rise in emissions by 2023," the report further cautioned. This means that India not only has to deal with climate change and undertake energy transition but also confront the protectionism of developed countries, said the report. The European Union is on

course to implement its Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), and both the United Kingdom and the United States are in different stages of imposing their versions of it in due course. The EU argues that this mechanism creates a level playing field for domestically manufactured goods, which must adhere to stricter environmental standards, and help reduce emissions from imports. However, other nations, particularly developing countries, worry that this would harm their economies and make it too expensive to trade with the bloc. According to a report by the independent think tank Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), CBAM will impose an additional 25 per cent tax on carbon-intensive goods, such as iron, steel, cement, fertilisers, and aluminium, exported from India to the EU. Based on data from the past three years, this tax burden would represent 0.05 per cent

of India's GDP. "It would be a comedy if it were not real and tragic. Even as developed nations prepare to impose a carbon tax at the border on imports coming into their countries laden with carbon, they are ramping up energy demand like never before, thanks to their obsession with letting AI guide, take over and dominate natural intelligence," the report said. For instance, the report cited a broad estimate by the International Energy Agency which said that a single ChatGPT search consumes 10 times more energy than a similar query on Google. According to a research report published in April, Goldman Sachs analysts wrote that the demand for power in the United States would experience growth not seen in a generation, thanks to AI, and that "transmission, one of the major bottlenecks for clean energy transition, and the addition of data centres and AI could exacerbate this".

Sensex, Nifty settle lower ahead of Budget

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty ended lower on Monday, dragged down by heavy selling pressure in Reliance Industries and Kotak Mahindra Bank ahead of the Budget. Besides, a weak trend in global equity markets also hit investors sentiment, traders said. Falling for the second day in a row, the 30-share BSE Sensex fell 102.57 points or 0.13 per cent to settle at 80,502.08. During the session, it tanked 504 points or 0.62 per cent to 80,100.65. The NSE Nifty dipped 21.65 points or 0.09 per cent to 24,509.25. During the day, it dropped 168.6 points or 0.68 per cent to 24,362.30. Among the Sensex pack, Reliance Industries declined over 3 per cent after the company reported a 5 per cent drop in its June quarter net profit. Kotak Mahindra Bank also fell more than 3 per cent after its June quarter earnings failed to cheer investors.



ITC, State Bank of India, HCL Technologies and IndusInd Bank were the other big laggards. NTPC, UltraTech Cement, HDFC Bank and Mahindra & Mahindra were among the gainers. HDFC Bank climbed over 2 per cent after the company's consolidated net profit grew 33.17 per cent to Rs 16,474.85 crore in the June 2024 quarter. In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo and Shanghai settled lower, while Hong Kong

ended in the positive territory. European markets were trading higher in the mid-session deals. US markets ended lower in overnight trade on Friday. According to the Economic Survey, 2023-24 tabled in Parliament on Monday, capital markets are becoming more prominent in India's growth story, with an expanding share in capital formation and investment landscape on the back of technology,

innovation and digitisation. Further, Indian markets are resilient to global geopolitical and economic shocks, it added. "Despite heightened geopolitical risks, rising interest rates and volatile commodity prices, Indian capital markets have been one of the best performing among emerging markets in FY24," the Economic Survey said. Meanwhile, global oil benchmark Brent crude dipped 0.08 per cent to USD 82.53 a barrel. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth Rs 1,506.12 crore on Friday, according to exchange data. The BSE benchmark hit its new all-time high of 81,587.76 in the initial trade on Friday but failed to carry forward the winning momentum and tanked 738.81 points or 0.91 per cent to settle below the 81,000 mark at 80,604.65. Nifty tumbled 269.95 points or 1.09 per cent and ended at 24,530.90 after hitting its fresh record peak of 24,854.80 during the opening bell on Friday.

Rupee rises three paise to close at 83.67 against US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee consolidated in a narrow range to settle 3 paise higher at 83.67 (provisional) against the American currency on Monday, as crude oil prices and the US dollar retreated from their elevated levels. Forex traders said the Indian rupee recovered from all-time low levels and traded in a narrow range as mixed-to-weak domestic markets put downside pressure on the rupee. However, weak tone in the US dollar and a decline in crude oil prices cushioned the downside. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.66, and touched an intraday high of 83.65 and a low of 83.68 against the dollar during the trading session. It finally settled at 83.67 (provisional) against the American currency, registering a gain of 3 paise from its previous close.



On Friday, the rupee depreciated 7 paise to settle at its all-time low of 83.70 against the US dollar. "We expect the rupee to trade with a slight negative bias on the weak tone in the global markets and overall strength in the US dollar. Weak Asian currencies and a weak yuan may also support the dollar. However, weakness in crude oil prices and FII inflows may support the rupee at lower levels," said Anuj Choudhary - Research Analyst at

Sharekhan by BNP Paribas. Any intervention by the RBI may also support the rupee. Investors may take cues from India's Union Budget. USD-INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of Rs 83.20 to Rs 84.20, Choudhary added. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading lower by 0.17 per cent at 104.22. Brent crude futures, the

global oil benchmark, were trading marginally lower by 0.29 per cent at USD 82.39 per barrel. On the macroeconomic front, India's forex reserves jumped by USD 9.699 billion to an all-time high of USD 666.854 billion for the week ended July 12, the RBI said on Friday. In the previous reporting week, the kitty had increased by USD 5.158 billion to USD 657.155 billion, surpassing the previous high of USD 655.817 billion for the week ended June 7. In the domestic equity market, the 30-share BSE Sensex fell 102.57 points or 0.13 per cent to settle at 80,502.08 points and Nifty dropped 21.65 points or 0.09 per cent to 24,509.25 points. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net buyers in the capital markets on Friday as they purchased shares worth Rs 1,506.12 crore, according to exchange data.

CRR cut to help banks facing low deposit growth: SBI MD

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Lowering the cash deposit ratio or the proportion of deposits which banks are mandatorily required to park with the RBI will help the lenders facing low deposit growth, SBI Managing Director Ashwini Kumar Tewari said on Monday. Conversations for such a cut are on, he told reporters here, clarifying that the country's largest lender does not need such a reduction as it is well placed on the liquidity front. There has not been any formal request for a CRR cut made either, he added. Speaking at an event organised by domestic rating agency Careedge, Tewari said, "We have to look at various avenues for helping tide over the challenge posed by lower deposit growth", and specifically mentioned a request to get bank deposits at par with capital market investments while referring

to CRR and SLR. To a question on whether the bank has sought a CRR cut, he said, "We have not sought any formal dispensation, but it is a conversation we continue to have. I don't think there is any move to do this at the moment". When asked if a CRR cut will help banks tide over the continuing wedge between the credit and deposit growth, he said, "Of course, it will help". The economy will need resources to help fund the growth, he said, adding that 90 per cent of all economic activity is funded by the banks. SBI's statutory liquidity ratio or investments in government bonds are 2-3 per cent higher and hence, it may not benefit as much. But there are banks running credit deposit ratios of up to 90 per cent for whom the CRR cut, which expands the lendable resources for a bank, will be of help.

Gold rises ₹100 on jewellers' buying

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices rose by Rs 100 to Rs 75,650 per 10 grams in the national capital on Monday due to increased buying by jewellers and a firm trend in the overseas markets. However, silver prices plunged by Rs 600 to Rs 91,000 per kg. In the previous session, it had settled at Rs 91,600 per kg, as per the All India Sarafa Association. Saturday, the precious metal rates had closed at Rs 75,550 per 10 grams. Meanwhile, gold of 99.5 per cent purity also rose by Rs 100 to Rs 75,300 per 10 grams. It had ended at Rs 75,200 per 10 grams in the previous session. Traders attributed the rise in gold prices to fresh demand by local jewellers and a firm trend in the international markets. The white metal has declined Rs 3,400 per kg in the past four sessions since July 18 when it had fallen by Rs 400 to end at Rs 94,000 per kg. Globally, Comex gold is trading higher at USD 2,451.70 per ounce, up by USD 4.90 per ounce from the previous close. "After a sharp pullback from all-time highs last week, Comex gold edged higher on Monday as US election uncertainty weighed on US dollar and treasury yields," Kaynat Chainwala, AVP of Commodity Research at Kotak Securities, said.

President Joe Biden's decision to end his re-election campaign and endorse Vice President Kamala Harris prompted speculation on whether it would benefit or hinder chances of former President Donald Trump returning to the White House. As a result, the bulls of the US dollar remained cautious and the commodity prices gained some traction. Traders are now eagerly anticipating the release of several key economic indicators ahead of the Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) policy decision next week, Chainwala added. However, silver was marginally down at USD 29.25 per ounce in New York. According to commodity market experts, traders also worried about slowing Chinese economic growth, geopolitical risks from the Russia-Ukraine war and the ongoing conflicts in the Middle East will benefit the safe-haven asset. Further, traders are awaiting the upcoming release of the US Personal Consumption Expenditures (PCE) price index data on Friday for more cues about the US Federal Reserve's monetary policy path, which will provide directions for the bullion prices in the near future, they said.

Sebi returns draft IPO documents of recruitment solution provider Crizac

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Sebi has returned the draft documents of student recruitment solution provider Crizac Ltd, which was looking to float Rs 1,000 crore Initial Public Offering (IPO), an update with the markets regulator showed on Monday. The move might delay the Kolkata-based company's initial share-sale. The proposed IPO was entirely an Offer For Sale (OFS) by promoters, Pinky Agarwal and Manish Agarwal, with no fresh issue component.

The OFS consists of the sale of equity shares worth Rs 841 crore by Pinky Agarwal and up to Rs 159 crore by Manish Agarwal, according to the offer document. The company filed its Draft Red Herring Prospectus (DRHP) with the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) in April. According to an update on Sebi's website on Monday, the markets regulator returned the company's offer document on July 15 without providing reasons for the same. Crizac offers international student recruitment



solutions to global institutions of higher education in the United Kingdom, Canada, the Republic of Ireland, Australia and New Zealand.

It has established partnerships with leading universities in the UK and is a major player in student recruitment from India to the UK, holding a significant market share of about 13 per cent based on the number of Indian students pursuing higher education in the UK in 2023, the draft papers quoted a F&S report. Over the last three years, Crizac facilitated enrolment applications from over 72 countries through its registered agents on its technology platform. It processed more

than 3.82 lakh student applications and collaborated with over 140 global universities. Crizac's pro forma consolidated revenue from operations during the fiscal year 2023 jumped 79.5 per cent to Rs 472.97 crore from Rs 263.53 crore in the previous year. Besides, profit after tax grew 65.50 per cent to Rs 112.14 crore for the financial year 2023 from Rs 67.76 crore in the preceding fiscal. Equirus Capital and Anand Rathi Advisors are the book-running lead managers to the issue.

Cut import duty on smartphone components in Budget, Govt told

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Economic think tank GTRI on Monday urged the Government to cut import duty on smartphone components in the Budget as it could lead to an increase in superficial assembly plants that rely heavily on imported parts. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will present the Union Budget for 2024-25 tomorrow. The Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) said the current schemes and tariff structure resulted in great success, and the current framework is also ensuring duty-free imports of components for exports. "Do not cut import duty on smartphone components in this Budget. Removing tariffs could lead to an increase in superficial assembly plants that rely heavily on imported parts, contributing little to the local economy.

"Imported components and subassemblies account for up to 90 per cent of the bill of material value for an India-made phone," GTRI Founder Ajay Srivastava said. Currently, import tariffs on the product is 20 per cent while duty on components range between 0 and 20 per cent. The Budget should maintain these tariffs for several compelling reasons, he said. "Smartphone is the most celebrated success story pushed by PLI (production linked incentive) incentives and a clever tariff arbitrage between these phones and its components," he added. India's production of this item has crossed USD 49 billion in FY24, and its exports grew from USD 10.96 billion in FY23 to USD 15.57 billion in FY24, a growth of 42 per cent. Additionally, over 98 per cent of smartphones sold in India are made locally,



demonstrating the success of policies like the PLI scheme, which offers a 4-6 per cent cash incentive on annual incremental production. No need to change a policy giving great results, it said. The GTRI added that Indian manufacturers can import necessary inputs or capital goods duty-free for manufacturing and exporting electronic items, facilitated through schemes

like Advance Authorisation, Export Promotion Capital Goods, Special Economic Zones (SEZs), and 100 per cent Export Oriented Units. Firms can also use the customs bond scheme for

smartphones. In 2023, Apple's iPhone production in India exceeded Rs 1 lakh crore (about USD 13.5 billion), with Rs 65,000 crore worth of exports," the think-tank said. Schemes like SEZs thus allow import of all inputs at zero duty, thus making Indian smartphone globally competitive, it added. In FY24, electronics imports crossed USD 83.92 billion, with components growing from USD 25.13 billion in FY23 to USD 34.36 billion in FY24, a 36.8 per cent increase. It added that the high reliance on imported parts in local manufacturing suggests that cutting import duties would eliminate incentives to establish deeper manufacturing operations in India, leading firms to assemble mobile phones from nearly complete imported kits and exit once incentives disappear.

"Maintaining current import tariffs is crucial for sustaining the growth and depth of India's smartphone manufacturing sector. Reducing these tariffs could encourage short-term assembly operations over long-term, valuable manufacturing, undermining the industry's success and future potential," it said. Srivastava said these tariffs are not just protective measures but catalysts for fostering a robust, self-reliant smartphone manufacturing ecosystem in India. This ecosystem can compete globally while driving local employment and technological advancement, he added. "Preserving these tariffs is essential for continuing the remarkable growth trajectory and nurturing the deep manufacturing capabilities of India's smartphone sector," he said.

ATHLETES OF INDIAN HERITAGE LOOK TO SHINE AT PARIS GAMES

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India would not be limited to the Indian contingent in the upcoming Paris Olympics.

PTI takes a look at some Indian-origin athletes who will be representing their adopted countries at the Paris Games:

RAJEEV RAM (Tennis, USA): Perhaps the most well known athlete on the list. The 40-year-old was born in Denver, USA to parents who migrated from Bangalore.

Stepped in academics, Ram's father Raghav, who passed away in April 2019, due to pancreatic cancer, was a botanist while his mother Sushma worked as a scientific technician. But Ram chose to break tradition and pursue tennis.

"I am very proud to be of Indian heritage and represent the community in any way I can. In tennis, there are not many of us from the community. Any success that we can achieve as a closed group can inspire the next generation to excel," Rajeev had once said. Playing for the USA, Rajeev has achieved considerable success. The tennis doubles specialist won five Grand Slams titles including four men's doubles and one mixed doubles.



(Left to right): Rajeev Ram (Tennis, USA); Prithika Pavade (Table Tennis, France); Kanak Jha (Table Tennis, USA); Shanti Pereira (Singapore, Athletics) and Amar Dhesi (Wrestling, Canada)

He teamed up with Venus Williams to clinch the mixed doubles 2016 Rio Olympics. He will compete in the men's doubles event.

PRITHIKA PAVADE (Table Tennis, France): Prithika's father was born and raised in Puducherry. In 2003, he migrated to Paris after getting married. A year later, Prithika was born in the French capital.

A TT player himself, Prithika's father introduced

her to table tennis when she was six. At only 16 years old, she participated in her first Olympic Games in Tokyo. The 19-year-old is studying chemistry and environmental science and will compete in women's singles, where she has been seeded 12th, the women's doubles and mixed doubles events.

KANAK JHA (Table Tennis, USA): Another Indian origin athlete competing at the Paris

Games will be USA table tennis player Kanak Jha. Jha's mother Karuna is from Mumbai while father Arun was raised in Kolkata and Prayagraj. Both are IT professionals.

Jha's fascination with table tennis started at the India Community Centre in Milpitas, California. He and his elder sister Prachi, also a TT player, immediately wanted to try out the sport. In no time he started beating

players twice his size. To keep him close to his roots, Jha's mom enrolled him in a Jainshala and Hindishala, centres where he could learn Hindi and about Jainism.

The 24-year-old is a four-time U.S. National Champion (2016, 2017, 2018, 2019) and two-time Olympian (2016, 2020).

He was USA's youngest athlete at the 2016 Rio Olympics and also the first American to win a medal at the Youth

Olympics in Argentina in 2018. He will be competing in the men's singles event at Paris.

SHANTI PEREIRA (Singapore, Athletics): Known as Singapore's Sprint Queen, Veronica Shanti Pereira has her roots in Kerala. Her grandparents hailed from Vettukad near Thiruvananthapuram. But after Shanti's grandfather got a job in Singapore, the couple migrated from India.

Last year, Pereira ended Singapore's 49-year-long wait for a track and field medal at the Asian Games, after she clinched a silver in women's 100m.

Awarded the 'Sportswoman of the Year' at the Singapore Sports Awards, Pereira will be one of the Lion City's two flag-bearers at the Paris Olympics opening ceremony. She also has a children's book -- 'Go Shanti Go!' -- based on her life, written by her two

elder sisters. She will compete in the women's 100m race in Paris.

AMAR DHESI (Wrestling, Canada): Amarveer was born in Surrey, British Columbia, a small province on the western coast of Canada to Balbir Dhesi.

A former Greco Roman national champion, Amar's father belongs to village Sanghwal in district Jalandhar in Punjab. Balbir had trained at the NIS Patiala and even got a job with the Punjab Police but moved to Canada in search of greener pastures in 1979. Once there, he worked in a sawmill factory and started the Khalsa Wrestling Club for youth in Surrey in 1985. Amar would attend practice with his dad and older brother Paramveer since he was five and entered his first competition as an eight-year-old.

Amar, who loves to watch London Games bronze-medallist Yogeshwar Dutt's wrestling videos, made his Olympic debut at Tokyo 2020 where he finished 13th in the men's 125kg freestyle event. He won his first senior gold medal a year later at the Pan American Championships and then captured 125kg gold at the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham. The 28-year-old will compete in the men's 125kg freestyle event.

The Kerala Story in athletics: Growth hits flat-line as powerhouse on wane

PTI ■ BENGALURU

It's not a dire situation yet, but the dwindling number of athletes from Kerala in India's Olympic contingents shows that the growth of athletics in the state, which was once a track-and-field powerhouse, has certainly hit a disheartening flat-line.

These numbers will summarise the situation before the deep dive: India's athletics squad for Paris Olympics has 29 members (18 men and 11 women). Kerala will be represented by four members -- Muhammed Anas, Muhammed Ajmal, Mijo Chacko Kurian (all men's 4x400m relay), and Abdulla Aboobacker (men's triple jump).

In the Tokyo Olympics, Kerala made its presence through Yahiya, Noah Nirmal Tom, Alex Antony, KT Irfan, MP Jabir and M Sreeshankar in the track and field events. The state had better representation at the Rio Games in 2016 through Anas, Jinson Johnson, T Gopi, Jisna Mathew, Tintu Luka, OP Jaisha and M Renjith.

Along with the diminishing overall numbers, a close look will reveal another anomaly -- a female athlete from the state is not a part of the Indian squad for the second successive Olympics.

It's a downfall for the powerhouse that produced some iconic names such as

PT Usha, Shiny Wilson, Anju Bobby George, Rosa Kutty, Mercy Kuttan and Bobby Aloysius among others. "It's a matter of concern that the current Indian (Olympics-bound) contingent does not have too many names from Kerala, especially women. It reflects the way athletics, and sports in general, is being treated in the state by the officials," a veteran administrator told PTI.

"Whenever an athlete from the state does well in an international competition, our politicians and other officials will make grand announcements. But there are hardly any follow-ups," said the administrator.

A decorated veteran athlete echoed that sentiment.

"Yeah! It is true. Action never really follows those promises. We have the example of (VK) Vismaya in front of us. She is running pillar to post to get the promised government job." Vismaya held off the then world champion Salwa Nasser to win the 4x400m gold at the Jakarta Asian Games in 2018. She was pledged a job by the state government then, but it's yet to materialise.

Vismaya could not be contacted for the latest update about her job status. However, Hima Das, MR Poovamma and Saritaben Gayakwad, the other 4x400 relay team members, received jobs and other cash awards as per the



promise made by the respective state governments.

"If a gold winner in the Asian Games has to wait over five years to get a promised job, then you can guess the fate of other lesser-known sportspersons.

"I won't blame them if they look to play for a different state. After all, a job and financial security matter to an athlete whose career is unpredictable," the athlete said.

However, Kerala State Sports Council (KSSC) president U Sharaf Ali said the delay was not deliberate.

"There have been a few delays, I admit. But we will keep our word at the earliest to honour the athletes who have brought laurels to the country

and the state," said Ali.

He said injuries to front-line state athletes like Ancy Sojan, a long jump silver medal winner in the Hangzhou Asian Games, was also a reason behind the marginal representation of state athletes in the Indian Olympic squad.

"Some of the top names like Ancy are coming back after an (ankle) injury and T Gopi also has a long-standing knee injury issue, and could not qualify for Paris.

"Sreeshankar (long-jump) underwent a surgery recently and he will also not be competing in the Olympics. It's unfortunate," said Ali.

On her return, Ancy clinched top spot in the Indian Grand Prix '3 in

Bengaluru with a leap of 6.52m but that was not enough for her to book a ticket to Paris.

But these are issues at the top, while the rot has percolated to the grassroots level too.

The stories of mismanagement and apathy are galore in a state that often prides itself for the abundance of talent at junior level.

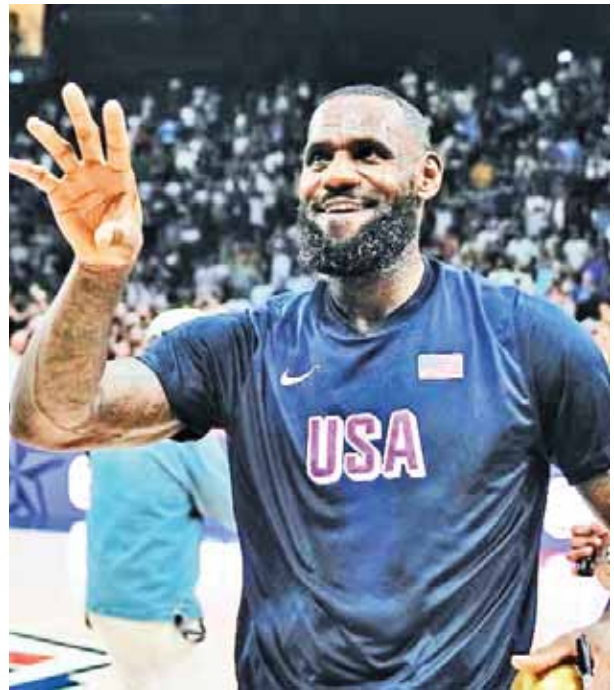
"Talent is there. But talent alone will not bring success, as the athletes' needs must be met as they require proper financial back-up to buy equipment.

"Many of them are coming from poor families and we don't get as many sponsors in athletics as in cricket or football. We are largely dependent on government funds," said a well-established state-level coach.

Few months back, the state athletes had to spend money from their pocket to travel to Coimbatore for the junior national championship.

"Money is one thing. Even some of the traditional track and field stadiums like the Maharajas are in a dilapidated state. The authorities are just starting the renovation work on many of them.

"What they don't realise is that it deprives budding athletes valuable practice time. It's affecting the overall quality of our athletes and they will be forced to leave the state in search of better facilities," rued the coach.



LeBron James selected as Team USA male flagbearer for Paris Olympics opening ceremony

AP ■ NEW YORK

LeBron James wasn't totally sure what the opening ceremony was all about when he was picked for his first Olympics in 2004.

This time, he'll be one of the stars of the show.

James has been picked by his fellow U.S. Olympians to serve as the male flagbearer for the Americans in Friday night's opening ceremony for the Paris Games. He becomes the third basketball player -- and the first men's player -- to carry the U.S. flag at the start of an Olympics, joining Dawn Staley for the Athens Games in 2004 and Sue Bird of the Tokyo Games that happened in 2021.

The 39-year-old James got word of the honor Monday in London, a few hours before the U.S. Men's team was scheduled to play its final pre-Olympics exhibition game against World Cup champion Germany.

"There's obviously the utmost respect for who he is as a person and a player and how good he is," fellow U.S. Star and first-time Olympian Stephen Curry said earlier this month of James, someone he's faced off against four times in the NBA Finals and is now teaming up with for the first official time.

The female U.S. flagbearer will be revealed in the coming days. The International Olympic Committee decided in 2020 that national delegations would have two flagbearers -- one male, one female -- at the opening ceremony at an Olympics, a move to promote gender parity. The U.S. is expected to have nearly 600 athletes in the Paris Games, about 53% of them female.

James -- a global icon, a four-time NBA champion and the league's all-time leading scorer set to go into his

record-tying 22nd NBA season -- is set to play in the Olympics for the fourth time, after he was part of U.S. Teams that won bronze in 2004, gold at Beijing in 2008 and gold again in London in 2012. He walked in the opening ceremony at each of his three previous Olympics.

This time, he'll float. This will be an opening ceremony like none other in Olympic history: Thousands of athletes will be part of a flotilla sailing along the River Seine at sunset toward the Eiffel Tower. It's a 6-kilometer (3.7-mile) route, with about 320,000 guests set to watch from the river bank and about 1 billion more, Olympic officials estimate, watching on televisions around the world. Not all Olympic athletes take part in the opening ceremony; many skip it for logistical reasons, such as having to compete the following day. James and the four-time defending gold medalist U.S. Men don't open Olympic play until Sunday, when they face Serbia at Lille, France.

James and the U.S. Olympians will be waiting longer than almost any other nation for their trip on the Seine. By IOC custom, Greece -- which will have NBA star Giannis Antetokounmpo as one of its two flagbearers -- will lead the procession, followed by the Refugee Olympic Team and then about 200 more national delegations. The U.S. is scheduled to go next-to-last in the procession, because Los Angeles will play host to the next Summer Games in 2028. France, as the host, will be the final nation in the opening ceremony procession. Its men's basketball team, featuring reigning NBA rookie of the year Victor Wembanyama, opens Olympic play on Saturday and isn't expected to be present for the opening ceremony.



I am not going to make mistakes of Tokyo in Paris: Manika Batra

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Wiser after her maiden Olympics appearance in Tokyo, Indian table tennis star Manika Batra on Monday said she is focused on taking one match at a time in the upcoming Paris Games and a medal will not be in her mind in the initial rounds.

Preparing for the Paris Olympics along with her teammates, Batra said she has learned from her Tokyo Games experience.

"I have learned many things from the last Olympics, and I am not going to make those mistakes again. My mindset has changed since then, I am calmer and have more confidence in myself," said Batra during an interview with Ultimate Table Tennis (UTT).

"I have been working on my stamina and my agility, and my ultimate aim is to challenge for a medal. "But I will go slowly. I will try to be in that zone and give my best. I will go round by round

and not think of a medal too early. I will give my best for my country," Batra, who represents PBG Bengaluru Smashers in UTT, added.

Batra played an instrumental role in the women's team qualifying for the Paris Olympics, a first for Indian table tennis. She also reached the quarter-finals of the WTT Saudi Smash in May beating World No. 2 and former world champion Wang Manyu of China and World No. 14 Nina Mittelham of Germany. "India qualified for the first time (for the Olympics), this is a huge achievement. I am really happy with how we are working together (at the camp). I think we have a shot at the medal and we should give our best," Batra said.

"The growth of women's table tennis in India is really inspiring. I see many of my fellow players playing really well. Everyone in the team is motivated and training very hard. Women's table tennis in India will only grow further," she said.

Veteran Indian goalkeeper Sreejesh to retire after Paris Olympics

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Celebrated India hockey goalkeeper P R Sreejesh on Monday announced that he will bid adieu to the game after the Paris Olympics, ending a career that spanned 18 years during which he was a pivotal figure in some historic moments for the side.

The 36-year-old, a veteran of 328 International caps, including three Olympic Games, and multiple Commonwealth Games and World Cups, will be playing in his fourth Olympics in Paris beginning July 26.

"As I prepare for my last dance in Paris, I look back with immense pride and forward with hope," Sreejesh said in a Hockey India press release.

"This journey has been nothing short of extraordinary, and I am forever grateful for the love and support from my family, teammates, coaches, fans and Hockey India. Thank you for believing in me.

"My teammates have stood beside through the tough and the ardent times. We all want to give our absolute best here in Paris and certainly, the desire is to change the colour of our medal," he added, referring to perhaps the biggest moment of his career -- a bronze in the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

After making his debut at the 2006 South Asian Games, Sreejesh was a part of various memorable wins for India, including a gold in the 2014 Asian Games and a bronze medal in the 2018 Asiad in Jakarta-Palembang.



He was also there in the Asian Champions Trophy-winning side in 2018, and the 2019 FIH Men's Series Finals champion team in Bhubaneswar.

The affable keeper had a crucial role in the silver medal-winning team of the 2022 Commonwealth Games as well.

Sreejesh was one of the main architects of India's historic bronze medal win at the Tokyo Olympics and captain Harmanpreet Singh said the team will look to secure another medal at the Paris Games this time to make Sreejesh's last tournament a memorable one.

"Paris 2024 will indeed be a special tournament. We have decided to dedicate our campaign to the legend PR Sreejesh," said Harmanpreet. "He has been an inspiration for all of us and I still remember his mentorship in 2016 Junior World Cup when we lifted the title. It was the beginning of

many of our careers in International hockey and he has shaped each one of our careers in his own way.

"We want to 'Win it for Sreejesh' and we are all more encouraged to stand on the podium once again."

The man from Kerala, who had also played a vital role in India's third-place finish at the Hockey Pro League 2021/22, was awarded the Major Dhyani Chand Khel Ratna Award in 2021.

He is only the second sports person from India to win the award of World Games Athlete of the Year in 2021. Besides, he won consecutive FIH Goalkeeper of the Year awards in 2021 and 2022. Last year, Sreejesh stood tall in India's gold medal-winning campaign at the Asian Games that sealed the team's berth for Paris Olympics. Congratulating Sreejesh on his stellar career, HI President Dilip Tirkey said: "Sreejesh was

Good for TRP but my relationship with Kohli is personal, declares Gambhir

PTI ■ MUMBAI

India's newly-appointed head coach Gautam Gambhir on Monday declared that his much talked about relationship with batting mainstay Virat Kohli "is between the two of us and not for TRPs", asserting that they are going to be "on same page" in the coming times. Gambhir and Kohli had not been the best of friends, something which was evident from the multiple confrontations between the two in the IPL. However, the duo will now be working together starting with the white-ball tour of Sri Lanka from July 27. "Good for the TRP, but my relationship is not public. What kind of a relationship I share with Virat Kohli... I

think it's between two mature individuals," Gambhir said. Gambhir was addressing a press conference along with chief selector Ajit Agarkar ahead of India's tour of Sri Lanka where they will play three T20 Internationals and as many ODIs. In the context of Kohli, Gambhir added, "On the field, everyone has got the right to fight for their own jersey and come back to a winning dressing room. "But at the moment, we're representing India, representing 140 crore Indians and I'm sure we're going to be on the same page and try and make India proud." Kohli, who recently announced retirement from the T20 International format, is part of India's ODI squad



against the island nation and ahead of that, the former India skipper has apparently communicated to the BCCI that he's ready to begin this new phase with a clean slate. Gambhir said the two share a very good relationship (with him) off the field. "...And will continue to do that. But yes, to make it more public, what kind of a relationship... I think it's between two individuals. I've had a lot of chats with him (Kohli)... We've shared messages. "Sometimes, just because we want headlines, it's not important. Right now, the most important thing is we both are going to be working extremely hard to make India proud. And that's our job." THE SUPPORT STAFF QUESTION: Former India

all-rounder Abhishek Nayar and Netherlands batter Ryan ten Doeschate, who worked with Gambhir in the IPL 2024 during his stint as mentor of the Kolkata Knight Riders, are joining the Indian team coaching staff for the Sri Lanka tour. Gambhir said the full details of his support staff will be known only after the Sri Lanka tour. "Really happy with BCCI. They've agreed with most things I've asked for. The crux of the support staff will remain as they are. "The rest of the staff will be finalised after the Sri Lanka tour. (For now) Abhishek and Ryan as assistant coach. T Dilip will continue as fielding coach. Sairaj Bahutule as interim bowling coach for the Sri Lanka tour."

We wanted someone who was likely to be available more often: Agarkar on Suryakumar as T20 captain

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Fitness, feedback from the dressing room and consistent availability swung the pendulum in Suryakumar Yadav's favour when it was decided to appoint him captain of the Indian T20 team ahead of Hardik Pandya, chief selector Ajit Agarkar said here on Monday. Agarkar was addressing a media conference along with newly-appointed head coach Gautam Gambhir ahead of India's tour of Sri Lanka where the team will play three T20 Internationals and as many ODIs against the hosts starting July 27. "Why Surya was made captain? Because he is one of the deserving candidates. The one we know has been around the dressing room over the last one year, you get feedback from the dressing room a lot. He has got a good cricketing brain and he is still one of the best T20 batters in the world," Agarkar said during the joint press conference. "You (would) want a captain that's going to be more likely to play all the games. We think he's a deserving candidate and hopefully we'll see over time how he develops into the role." The chairman of selectors said they wanted a captain with a proven fitness record and not someone who was prone to injuries as Pandya is believed to be. "But in regards to Hardik (Pandya), he's still a very important player for us and that's what we want him to be that player that he can be because those sorts of skill sets are very difficult to find what he has," Agarkar said. "Fitness, obviously, has been a challenge for him over the last few years and then it becomes a little bit more difficult for him and even as selectors," he said. "We're trying to now, we've got a bit more time till the next T20 World Cup when we can look at a few things. It's not rushed at the moment." "We want him to be, you know, as I said, he's an important player for us and hopefully his performances are more important - that was the thought behind it. The fitness is a clear challenge and we want someone who's likely to be available more often than not," Agarkar said. As regards to former vice-captain KL Rahul being



to try and see... I mean, this time (in) T20 (against Afghanistan), frankly, when Hardik did get injured was a little bit of a challenge. "At that point, Rohit wasn't playing but was still around (and) made our life a lot easier that he could come and play. We don't want that situation going forward again," he continued. CHANCE FOR GILL TO LEARN FROM EXPERIENCE: Agarkar said the selectors wanted vice-captain Shubman Gill to learn from the experience as well as from the senior players. "Shubman is a guy that we feel is a three-format player and seems to have shown a lot of quality over the last year or so that we hear from the dressing room," he said. "You try and have somebody who can also learn from a couple of the senior guys that are there. "Surya in this instance or Rohit who's still around so we don't face the same challenges (that) suddenly (you are) trying to look for a captain in case there are injuries or loss of form somewhere," he explained. "He's shown some decent leadership qualities. We want to try and get him the experience that he can put forward. There are no guarantees in life but at this point, that's the thought," he said. PACE BOWLING COMBINATION IN FUTURE: Agarkar admitted that while playing Tests in India the team may not need three seamers but going forward they will be discussing the fast bowling lineup too. "Some of the guys, some of the fast bowlers are at the NCA. We hope that for the next month or so, they'll be back up playing," he said. "I think he has (Mohammed Shami) started to bowl which is a good sign for us. (The) 19th September is the first Test. That was always the goal," he added. "We don't quite know whether that's the timeline at the moment. That I have to speak to the guys at the NCA but that's the aim. "There are so many Tests coming in India; maybe you don't play three seamers in the eleven. But, going forward, there's a lot of cricket or Test cricket that's coming. We need some conversation around it," he said.

Gambhir-Agarkar in sync: Players won't be allowed to pick and choose series for workload management

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gautam Gambhir's plain-spoken and Ajit Agarkar's lucidity is set to make for a heady combo as the new head coach and the chairman of selectors looked completely in sync while spelling out, in no uncertain terms, that days of cherry-picking series by citing workload management could be over. They explained certain tough calls while in a few things, they were subtle yet said enough to allow people to read between the lines. Physically, neither Gambhir nor Agarkar have an imposing presence but ask anyone in the periphery of Indian cricket and people will swear by the fact that these are two individuals with sharp and informed takes, which don't change readily. As they put up a united front in their first joint media interaction, it was clear that they were ready to put their money where their mouths were. Technically, it might seem that Agarkar enters his second year of chairmanship but perhaps like Gambhir, this is also a fresh start in which the duo can create a road-map for the 2027 ODI World Cup. So what was the biggest takeaway from the Gambhir-Agarkar joint press briefing ahead of the tour of Sri Lanka? Workload management seems to be the biggest one. The prickly word in Indian cricket will again dominate air space but this time, it is crystal clear that rules will be different for batters and bowlers. "I've said it before, workload management for someone like (Jasprit) Bumrah is important.



If you are a batter who is in good form, might as well play all the games," Gambhir was as straight as ramrod in his reply when asked about his take on the issue. It was widely believed that both ODI and Test captain Rohit Sharma and team's premier batter Virat Kohli will skip the three games in Sri Lanka but their presence ultimately is an indicator that both the seniors will probably play as many series as possible. "Now that Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli will play only two formats, I expect them to be available for most games," Gambhir addressed the issue with a lot of clarity just like chairman Agarkar was up and ready to explain what went against Hardik Pandya, who was considered to be a natural successor to Rohit, at least in the T20 format. "You (would) want a captain that's going to be more likely to play all the games," one couldn't get a more crystal clear answer to a pointed question. What was more refreshing was that unlike selection committee chairmen of the past, Agarkar just didn't go by

his gut feeling about the leadership qualities but also took the view of the change room. "Why Surya was made captain? Because he is one of the deserving candidates. The one we know has been around the dressing room over the last one year, you get feedback from the dressing room a lot. "He has got a good cricketing brain and he is still one of the best T20 batters in the world," Agarkar elaborated. In the 27-minute media conference, one thing was reiterated time and again. Stars can no longer pick and choose. While acknowledging that a player of Pandya's skill-set is a rarity, Agarkar made it clear that the selection committee cannot be taken for granted. "Fitness, obviously, has been a challenge for him over the last few years and then it becomes a little bit more difficult for him and even as selectors," he said. Agarkar handled the tricky query on KL Rahul being ignored for captaincy with similar eloquence. "I wasn't there when KL was superseded; I wasn't the selector firstly."

Then there was the issue of Duleep Trophy and Agarkar was clear that if not all, most of the Indian Test team contenders will be playing at least one match of the tournament before India's rare season of 10 Tests commences on September 19. In case of Ravindra Jadeja, Agarkar was clear that the senior all-rounder wasn't dropped from the ODI team but his explanation did indicate that one might not see two players with pretty identical skill-sets in ODI set-up. "It would have been really pointless to take both him and Akshar for this short series... So, no, not at all dropped," he said on Jadeja. And then Gambhir had to address the elephant in the room - the conjectures about his relationship with Kohli, something the straight-shooter rejected as "good for TRP". Gambhir might be perceived as a 'My Way or High Way' man but his messaging was that he wants to be the agent that keeps the dressing room happy. And what qualifies as a happy dressing room?

Mumbai City FC sign Supratim Das for three years

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Mumbai City FC on Monday announced the signing 19-year-old midfielder Supratim Das on a three-year contract which will keep him at the club till Indian Super League (ISL) 2027. Das is known for his technical abilities, game awareness and "excels at holding the ball under pressure and delivering incisive passes as a midfielder", the club said in a statement. Das, who is from the Reliance Foundation Young Champs, played a crucial role in winning the sub-junior I-League title in the 2018-2019 season and in their runner-up finish in the MFA



Super Division League during the 2022-23 season. He also participated in the Reliance

Foundation Development League 2022-23 and 2023-24 and earned qualification for the Premier League Next Gen Cup in 2023. Das has been a part of the RFYC's exposure trips to Spain in 2017, 2018 and 2019 and to Japan earlier this year. "The club is known for developing young talents and it is a fantastic opportunity for me to develop my skills and polish my talent at the top level," Das said. MCFC's head coach Petr Kratky said, "We had our eyes on him for some time and are happy he has decided to join us. His vision, technical ability, and understanding of the game will benefit our team."

Dominant India women face Nepal, eye semifinal berth in Asia Cup

PTI ■ DAMBULLA

Buooyant India will look to extend their winning run and seal a semifinal berth when they face Nepal in their final Group A Women's T20 Asia Cup match here on Tuesday. India registered convincing wins in their first two matches of the continental tournament, beating traditional rivals Pakistan and United Arab Emirates by seven wickets and 78 runs respectively to put one foot in the semifinals. Minnows Nepal hardly have any time to recover from the thrashing they received at the hands of Pakistan in their previous outing on Sunday, the same day when the

tournament's overwhelming favourites and defending champions India bulldozed the hapless Emirates side. While India are primed to enter the last-four, Pakistan improved their net run rate with the comfortable win over Nepal lifting them to the second spot in Group A. India will, however, not be bothered by how the other teams are doing and will look to sustain the momentum they have gained with two convincing victories heading into the semifinals. India have flexed their muscles in both batting and bowling so far in the tournament, and are likely to continue in the same vein come

Tuesday. If the swashbuckling opening duo of Smriti Mandhana and Shafali Verma fired with the bat in the victory over Pakistan, after the bowlers' excellent display, skipper Harmanpreet Kaur and Richa Ghosh led the show in the middle-order in the hammering of the UAE. The big-hitting Ghosh, especially, was in destructive mood as she carted 64 in just 29 balls while Kaur compiled 66 in 47 deliveries. While Kaur played the anchor's role to perfection, it was Ghosh's blazing knock which helped India score their first-ever 200-plus total in T20Is. As far as the Indian bowling is



concerned, the likes of Renuka Singh, Pooja Vastrakar and Deepti Sharma have been doing a wonderful job of both containing runs and taking wickets. Even Tanuja Kanwar, who was roped in as a replacement for injured off-spinner Shreyanka Patil, performed her duty with aplomb, giving away only 14 runs while taking a wicket in her full quota of four overs. The Indu Barma-led Nepal, which started the tournament with a historic six-wicket victory over the UAE, is well aware of the task. They will certainly take confidence from their first-ever win in the event but the Himalayan nation will need a lot

more than that to even come close to challenging a dominant India. TEAMS: India (from): Harmanpreet Kaur (C), Smriti Mandhana, Shafali Verma, Jemimah Rodrigues, Richa Ghosh (wk), Uma Chetry (wk), Pooja Vastrakar, Deepti Sharma, Arundhati Reddy, Renuka Singh, D Hemalatha, Asha Sobhana, Radha Yadav, Tanuja Kanwar, Sajana Sajeevan. Nepal (from): Indu Barma (C), Kajol Shrestha, Rubina Chettri, Sabnam Rai, Sita Rana Magar, Rajmati Airee, Puja Mahato, Binu Rawal, Roma Thapa, Mamta Chaudhary, Kabita Joshi, Kabita Kunwar, Dolly Bhatta, Kritika Marasini, Samjhana Khadka.